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# THE SIEGE OF BOSTON ALLEN FRENCH



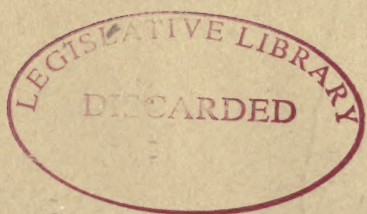
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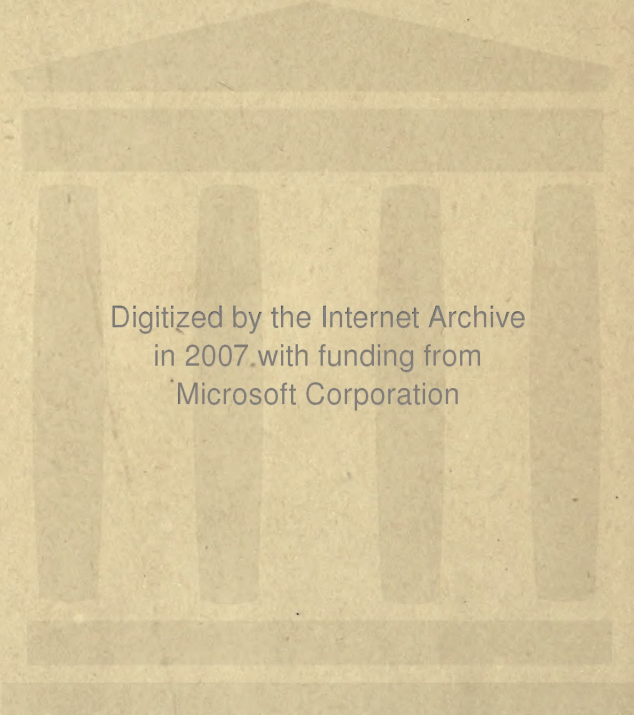


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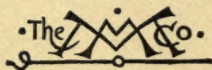




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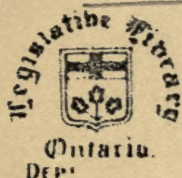
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# THE SIEGE OF BOSTON



U.S.  
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BY

ALLEN FRENCH



New York

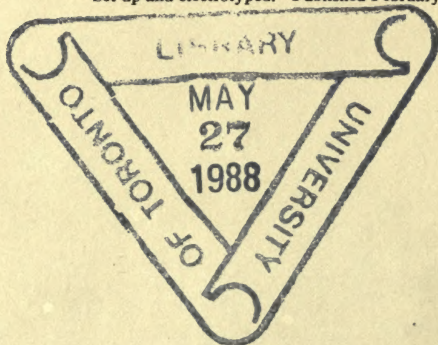
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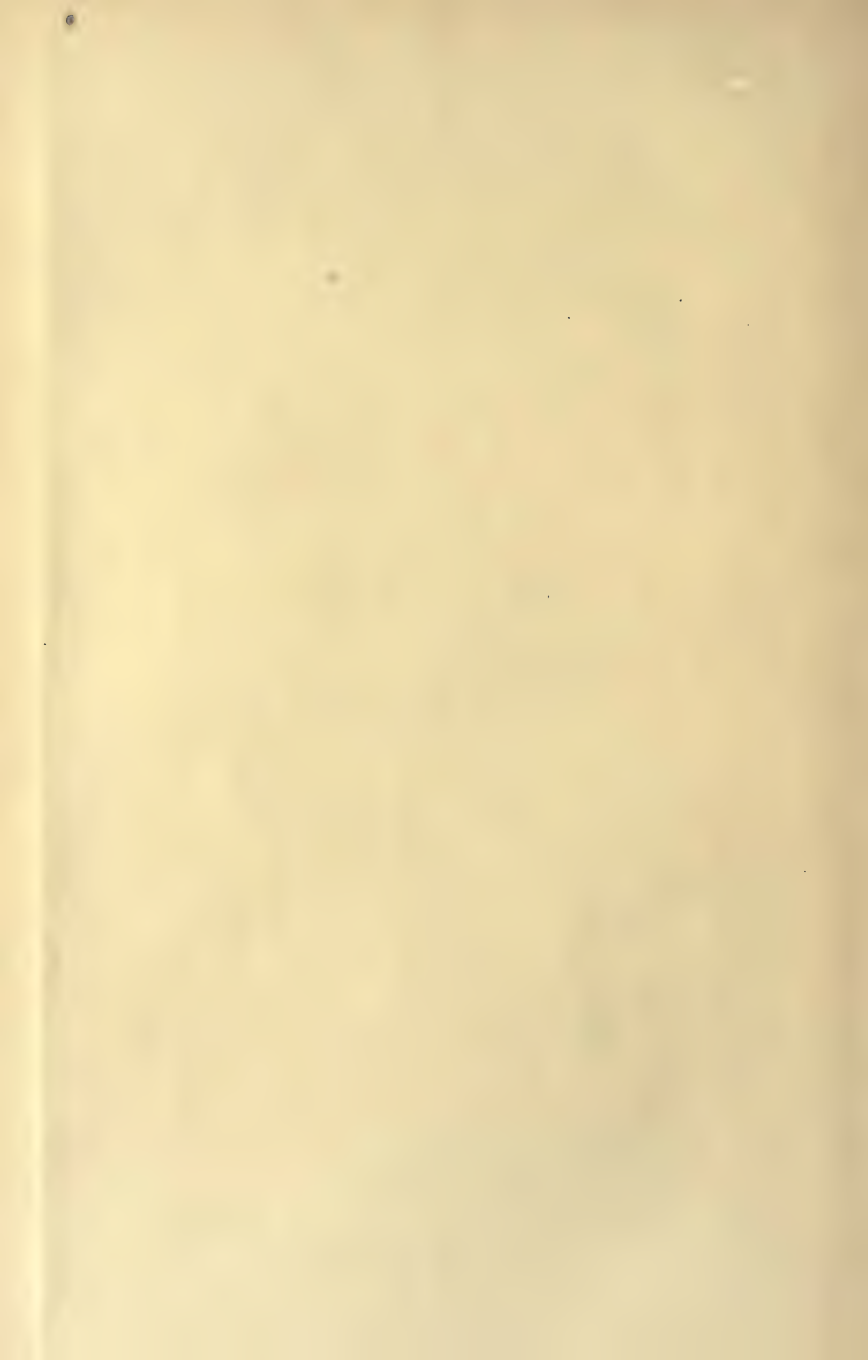
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TO C. E. S.



## PREFACE

IN writing this book I have endeavored to produce a brief and readable account of the Siege of Boston, and of the events which brought it about. These were, of course, parts of a larger history, the connection with which I have carefully indicated. My main endeavor, nevertheless, has been to treat my subject as a single organic series of events. To select the more interesting and significant masses of detail, and properly to coördinate them, has not been an easy task. The minor incidents were conditioned by the scale of the book; the result, I hope, is fluency and a more evident connection between the larger events.

So far as possible, I have relied upon contemporary statements. But no writer on the Siege can fail to acknowledge his deep obligations to the "History of the Siege" by Richard Frothingham. This acknowledgment I gladly



make. Since 1849, however, the date of the publication of the book, there has come to light interesting new material which I have endeavored to incorporate here. The other authorities upon which I have chiefly depended will be found by referring to the footnotes.

ALLEN FRENCH.

CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS,  
January, 1911.

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# THE SIEGE OF BOSTON

## CHAPTER I

### BEGINNINGS AND CONDITIONS

THE Siege of Boston was the culmination of a series of events which will always be of importance in the history of America. From the beginning of the reign of George the Third, the people of the English colonies in the new world found themselves at variance with their monarch, and nowhere more so than in Massachusetts. Since the New England people were fitted by their temperament and history to take the lead in the struggle, at their chief town naturally took place the more important incidents. These, which were often dramatic, had nevertheless a political cause and significance which link them in a rising series



that ended in a violent outbreak and the eleven months' leaguer.

As to the siege itself, it varies an old situation, for Boston was beset by its own neighbors in defence of the common rights. Previously the king's troops, though regarded as invaders, had been but half-hearted oppressors; it was the people themselves who persistently provoked difficulties. The siege proper is of striking military interest, for its hostilities begin by the repulse of an armed expedition into a community of farmers, continue with a pitched battle between regular troops and a militia, produce a general of commanding abilities, and end with a strategic move of great skill and daring. It is the first campaign of a great war, and precedes the birth of a nation. Politically, the cause of the struggle is of enduring consequence to mankind. Socially, the siege and its preliminaries bring to view people of all kinds, some weak, some base, some picturesque, some entirely admirable. The period shows the breaking up of an old society and the for-

mation of a new. A study of the siege is therefore of value.

It will be observed that the siege cannot satisfactorily be considered as a distinct series of military or semi-military events, abruptly beginning and still more abruptly ending. Such a view would reduce the siege to a mere matter of local history, having little connection with the larger movements of the American Revolution, and appearing almost as an accident which might have happened at any other centre of sufficient population.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, neither the siege nor the Revolution were accidents of history. That the Revolution was bound to come about, and that its beginnings were equally bound to be at Boston, these were conditioned in the nature, first of the colonists in general, and second of the New Englanders in particular.

<sup>1</sup> It may appear to a hasty consideration that Frothingham's "Siege of Boston" treats the siege as an isolated military event. It must, however, be remembered that Mr. Frothingham had treated previous events in a preliminary volume, his "Life of Joseph Warren."

However striking were certain of the occurrences, they were of less importance than their causes and consequences.

Accordingly I shall consider as an organic series the more important of those events which happened in Boston during the reign of George the Third, and which ended when the last of his redcoats departed from the town. In fact, in order to be perfectly intelligible I must first devote a few pages to a consideration of previous conditions.

"Any one," wrote George E. Ellis in the "Memorial History of Boston,"<sup>1</sup> "who attempts to trace the springs, the occasions, and the directing forces of the revolt . . . cannot find his clew a year short of the date when the former self-governed Colony of Massachusetts Bay became a Royal Province." He is right in pointing out that in 1692 the struggle took open form. Yet even then the controversy was not new. In other form it had been carried on for more than half a century previous. Its ultimate origin

<sup>1</sup> "Memorial History of Boston," ii, 31.



lay in the fact that the very charter under which the colony was planted differed from all other documents granted by any English king.

This difference lay in the omission of the condition, usual in such charters, that its governing board should meet in London practically for the purpose of supervision by the king. That the omission of this condition was the result of wisdom on the part of the founders, and stupidity on the part of the officers of the king, seems undeniable. The founders, unhappy and alarmed at the political and religious situation in England under Charles the First, were seeking to provide for themselves and their families a refuge from his oppressions. Secure in their charter, they presently left England for good. When they sailed for America they did all that could be done to cut themselves off from interference by the crown.

At intervals, extremely valuable for the future of America, the Massachusetts colony certainly was free of all restraint. Charles's

benediction seems to have been "Good rid-dance!" From the crown the colonists received no assistance whatever, and it was long both their boast and their plea that they had planted the colony "at their own expense." They were left to work out their own salvation.<sup>1</sup> As a result, their passionate desire for freedom from interference by the king grew into the feeling that they had earned it as a right. Englishmen they were still, and subjects of the king; but to the privileges of Englishmen they had added the right to manage their own affairs. The English king and the English law were to help them in their difficulties and to settle cases of appeal. In return they would grant money and fight for the king when necessary; but in the meantime they would live by themselves.

Taking advantage of the clause in their charter which authorized them "to ordain and establish all manner of wholesome and

<sup>1</sup> "They nourished by your indulgence? They grew up by your neglect of them!" Barre's speech in Parliament, February, 1765.

reasonable orders, laws, statutes, and ordinances," they speedily took to themselves everything but the name of independence. They instituted courts for all purposes, set up their legislative government, raised their own taxes, whether general or local, and perfected that wonderful instrument of resistance to oppression, New England town government. They even coined money. And, different from most of the other colonies, they chose their governor from among their own number.

Distance and home difficulties — for the Stuart kings usually had their hands full of trouble with their subjects — favored the non-interference which the colonists craved. When, however, the Stuarts had any leisure at all, they at once devoted it to quarrelling with their subjects in New England. Even to the easy-going Charles II the cool aloofness of the colonists was a bit too strong; to his father and brother it was intolerable.

The invariable methods of the colonists, when facing a demand from the king, were

evasion and delay. "Avoid or protract" were Winthrop's own words in 1635. In 1684 the General Court wrote advising their attorney, employed in England in defending the charter, "to spin out the case to the uttermost."<sup>1</sup> Once and once only until the Revolution — in the case of the seizing of Andros — did the men of Massachusetts proceed to action. Their habitual policy was safe, and, on the whole, successful. Slow communication (one voyage of commissioners from Boston to England took three months), and the existence in England of a strong party of friends, helped powerfully to obscure and obliterate the issues. Yet Charles I in 1640, and James II in 1689, made preparations to reduce the colony to proper subjection, by force if necessary.

It was doubtless well for Massachusetts that both Charles and James were presently dethroned, for against the power of England no successful resistance could then have been made. New England, indeed, might have

<sup>1</sup> "Memorial History of Boston," i, 340, 376.



been united against the king, but it is very unlikely that the other colonies would have given their help. Some generations more were needed before the aristocrats of Virginia could feel themselves at one with the Puritans of New England.

Yet it is interesting to notice the spirit of Massachusetts. On the news of Charles's intentions the colony prepared for resistance. In James's time it went a step further. When the news came of the expedition of William of Orange, Massachusetts cast in its lot with him. Without waiting to learn the result of the struggle, Boston rose against James's unpopular governor, and imprisoned him in the Castle. The act was heroic, for the Bloody Assizes had taught the world what punishment the cowardly king meted out to rebels.

It will be noticed that the political status of Massachusetts was already changed. After many delays Charles II had abrogated the charter. His death followed almost immediately, and Andros had been appointed at

the head of a provisional government. Doubtless the resistance to him had been inspired by the hope that the old charter might be restored. Instead, William, when once secure on the throne, issued a new charter. Under its provisions the colony, now a province, lived until the Revolution. In order that the events leading up to the siege may be understood, it will be well to consider the provisions of the new governmental machinery.

At the head of the province were to be a governor and a lieutenant-governor, both appointed by the king. Their powers were executive, with the right of veto over legislation, and also over certain appointments by the legislature. Laws passed by this legislature and not vetoed by the governor or the king were to go in force three years after their enactment. The legislature had two houses, the lower a popular chamber, called the Assembly, elected by the towns. The upper branch was called the Council. The first Council was appointed by the king; later

members were to be nominated by the Assembly for the approval of the governor. The Assembly and Council formed together the Great and General Court. Judges were to be chosen by the governor and Council, but all officers were to be paid by the General Court. As will be seen later, in the case of the Writs of Assistance, appeal could be taken to the English courts.

And now for the first time became evident the fact that three generations of practical independence had bred in America a race of men — or it may be better to say had fostered a school of thought — that never could agree in submitting to a distant and arbitrary authority. In the seventy years which followed, New England showed this spirit in many ways. The most prominent cause of disagreement was the question of the governor's prerogatives, resulting in constant bickerings with the crown.

The principle, of course, lay deeper still. On the one side were sovereigns whose powers were not yet definitely restricted, and who

were likely to resent any apparent tendency to make them less. On the other side was a people who had progressed far in self-government, and who resisted any limitation of their rights. It is not the purpose of this book to trace the earlier unification of the colonies under pressure from without. By the year 1760 that process was approaching completion; there was, therefore, in America a stronger feeling than ever, while across the water was that new ruler into whose youthful ears his mother had continually dinned the words, "George, be king!"

It is well to understand the status of a colony in those days, and the difficulties with which its inhabitants struggled. Yet it is hard for the modern man to conceive the restrictions upon freedom. From earliest days there had been discontent with the king's claim to the finest trees in the public forests, the "mast trees" which, reserved for the king's navy, no man might lawfully cut.<sup>1</sup> Exportation of lumber, except to England and the

<sup>1</sup> See, on this point, Sabine's "American Loyalists," 7.



British West Indies, was long illegal. Trade with the French and Spanish islands was prohibited entirely, and trade in many products of home manufacture (tobacco, sugar, wool, dye-stuffs, furs, are prominent examples) was forbidden "to any place but Great Britain — even to Ireland."<sup>1</sup> Certain merchandise might be imported at will, subject to duty; but most articles could be bought, and sold, only through Great Britain.

Further, internal commerce and manufacture were severely hampered. No wool or woollen product might be carried from one province to another. The Bible might not be printed. The making of hats was almost entirely suppressed. The manufacture of iron, on a scale sufficient to compete with English wares, was practically prohibited — as a "nuisance."<sup>2</sup>

Under all these restrictions the colonies were not as yet restive. To be sure there

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft's "United States," ed. 1855, v, 265. References to Bancroft will at first be to this edition.

<sup>2</sup> Bancroft's "United States," v, 266.

were smuggling and illicit trade, and grievances in plenty; yet the stress of colonial life, the continual danger from the north and west, had kept the provincials satisfied as a body. And now, at the opening of the reign of George III, with the French driven out of Canada and the Mississippi Valley, and the Indians subdued, there should have been concord between the colonists and the king.

The comparison between the two is very striking, while at the same time it is not easily brought home to the city dweller of to-day. City government gives the individual a chance to bury himself in the mass, and to avoid his duties; further, our cities are now many, and very large, while we are notoriously patient under misrule. In 1760, on the other hand, few towns had as yet adopted city government. Boston was the largest town, and its population was little more than fifteen thousand. So well did its enemies understand one reason for its truculence, that they even considered means to force upon

the town a city charter. The question came, however, to no definite proposition. The town therefore proceeded with its open discussion of all public questions, with its right of free speech in town meetings extended even to strangers, and with its *viva voce* vote letting each man know where his neighbor stood. "The town" was an entity of which each man felt himself a part. As a whole, its self-consciousness was like that of an individual: it could feel a trespass on its privileges as quickly as could the haughtiest monarch of the old world. And all New England was filled with towns whose feelings, on all essential points, were one and the same.

Against the town-meetings of America stood George III, as determined to assert his prerogatives as was any member of the house of Stuart. Still comparatively young, he had not yet learned that there are limitations of power, even to a king. And it was to the misfortune of his empire that there were few in England to teach him.

For the old Puritan middle class of the

Stuart days was gone. Its fibre had softened; the class itself had disappeared in the easier-going masses of a more prosperous day. For seventy-five years England had had no internal dissensions, and her foreign wars had added to her wealth and contentment. To her well-wishers it seemed as if the people had given itself to sloth and indulgence. "I am satisfied," wrote Burke, "that, within a few years, there has been a great change in the national character. We seem no longer that eager, inquisitive, jealous, fiery people which we have been formerly, and which we have been a very short time ago."<sup>1</sup> England was the country of Tom Jones, hearty and healthy, but animated by no high principles and keyed to no noble actions. It needed the danger of the Napoleonic wars to bring out once more the sturdy manliness of the nation. Through all the earlier reign of George III there was, to be sure, a remainder of the old high-minded spirit. Chatham and Rockingham, Burke, Barre, and others, spoke

<sup>1</sup> Trevelyan, "American Revolution," Part i, 21.



in public and private for the rights of the colonists, to whom their encouragement gave strength. But the greater part of the English people was so indifferent to the moral and political significance of the quarrel that the king was practically able to do as he pleased.

He proceeded on the assumption that every man had his price. The assumption was unhappily too correct, for he was able to gather round him, in Parliament or the civil service, his own party, the "King's Friends," who served him for the profit that they got. No tale of modern corruption can surpass the record of their plundering of a nation. With this goes a story of gambling, drinking, and general loose living which, while the attention is concentrated on it, rouses the belief that the nation was wholly degenerate, until the recollection of the remnant, Chatham and the party of the Earl of Rockingham, gives hope of the salvation of the country.

At any rate, for more than fifteen years of

his reign the king was in the ascendant. There was no party to depose him, scarcely one strong enough to curb him, even at times of popular indignation. He was, therefore, as no other king had been before him, able to force the issue upon the colonies, in spite of the protests of the few friends of liberty. In complete ignorance of the strength of the colonists, both in resources and in purpose, he proceeded to insist upon his rights. When it is remembered that those rights, according to his interpretation of them, were to tax without representation, to limit trade and manufactures, and to interfere at will in the management of colonial affairs, it will be seen that he was playing with fire.

The danger will appear the greater if it is considered that the population of the colonies had not progressed, like that of England, to days of easy tolerance. The Americans, and especially the New Englanders, were of the same stuff as those who had beheaded Charles I, and driven James II from his kingdom. They had among their military

officers plenty of such men as Pomeroy, who, destined to fight at Bunker Hill, wrote from the siege of Louisburg: "It looks as if our campaign would last long; but I am willing to stay till God's time comes to deliver the city into our hands."<sup>1</sup> Many besides himself wrote, and even spoke, in Biblical language. There were still heard, in New England, the echoes of the "Great Awakening"; the preaching of Whitefield and others had everywhere roused a keen religious feeling, and the people were as likely as ever to open town-meeting with prayer, and to go into battle with psalms.

Such, then, were the contestants in the struggle. On the one side was the king with his privileges, backed by his Parliamentary majority, and having at command an efficient army and navy, and a full treasury. There was at hand no one to resist him successfully at home, none to whose warnings he would listen. And on the other side were the colonists, quite capable of fighting for what they

<sup>1</sup> "Memorial History of Boston," ii, 116.

knew to be the "rights of Englishmen." Both hoped to proceed peaceably. In ignorance, each was hoping for the impossible, for the king would not retreat, and the colonists would not yield. As soon as each understood the other's full intention, there would be a rupture.





## CHAPTER II

### WRITS OF ASSISTANCE AND THE STAMP ACT

THE men who, whether in America or England, took sides with the king or the colonies as Tories and Whigs, or as “prerogative men” and “friends of liberty,” fall naturally into two classes. A line of cleavage could be seen at the time, and can even be traced now, among the supporters of either side, according as they followed principle or self-interest. There were those who sought profit in supporting the colonies, as well as those who knowingly faced loss in defending the king. It is well for Americans to remember, therefore, that while many sided with the king for what they could get, there were others whose minds could not conceive a country without a king, or a subject with inalienable rights. The best of the Tories honestly believed the Whig agitation

to be "unnatural, causeless, wanton, and wicked."<sup>1</sup> Such Americans were, in the inevitable struggle, truly martyrs to their beliefs.

Nevertheless, just as there was naturally more profit or prominence (and the two were often the same) on the king's side, so his party had the more self-seekers. "The cause is not worth dying for," said Ingersoll, facing the Connecticut farmers, and spoke the sentiment of all the stamp-officers who resigned their positions at the demand of the people. The cause, however, did seem worth working for. There were many, in England and America, who, like those whom Otis saw around him, "built much upon the fine salaries they should receive from the plantation branch of the revenue." Position, pay, and the chance to exploit the revenues as this was done in England, were the temptations which brought many to the side of the king,

<sup>1</sup>The adjectives are those of *Massachusettensis*, the ablest Tory pamphleteer, as quoted in Frothingham's "Siege," 33.

and which made men unite to urge upon him the acts which he desired for less selfish reasons.

Urged by principle, then, or excited by self-interest, the proposers of new measures were strong. The earliest act of the king's reign showed what could and what would be done, and brought upon the Boston stage the first of the actors in the drama. On the one hand were the governor, the justices, and the minor officials, on the other the people's self-appointed — but willingly accepted — leaders.

Francis Bernard was the first Massachusetts governor under George III. Bernard arrived August 2, 1760; the old king died on October 25; and in November the customs officials, stimulated by orders from home to enforce the provisions of the Sugar Act of 1733, petitioned for "writs of assistance," to empower them to summon help in forcible entries in search of smuggled goods. Now there can be no doubt that there was smuggling in the colony, even in Boston itself. On the other hand, the officials were inquisitorial

and rapacious. Once they were armed with writs of assistance, no dwelling would be safe from entry by them. The struggle was at once begun, and in the council chamber of the old Town House was fought out before the eyes of the province.

The scene is pictured on the walls of the modern State House. Chief among the justices sat Thomas Hutchinson, a man of property and education, and an excellent historian, but the very type of office-holder, and by prejudice and interest a partisan of the king. Against him stood James Otis, the first of the Massachusetts orators of liberty, a man of good family, and, like so many of the patriot leaders, a lawyer. His speech was the first definite pronouncement for a new order of things.

"I am determined," he said, "to sacrifice estate, ease, health, applause, and even life, to the sacred calls of my country." He referred to the "kind of power, the exercise of which cost one king of England his head and another his throne." Such language,



publicly spoken, was new. His argument was, to Englishmen, irrefutable. No precedent, no English statute, could stand against the Constitution. "This writ, if declared legal, totally annihilates" the privacy of the home. "Custom-house officers might enter our houses when they please, and we could not resist them. Upon bare suspicion they could exercise this wanton power. . . . Both reason and the Constitution are against this writ. . . . Every act against the Constitution is void."<sup>1</sup> The speech, continued for four hours, was a brilliant example of keen logic combined with burning eloquence.

This is Otis's great service to the cause of the Revolution. Fiery and magnetic, but moody and eventually unbalanced, he gave place in the public confidence to men perhaps of lesser talents, but with equal zeal and steadier purpose. Yet his service was invaluable. His speech expressed for his countrymen the indignation of the hour, and it pointed the way to younger men. To one

<sup>1</sup> "Memorial History of Boston," iii, 5.

at least of his hearers, John Adams, it was "like the oath of Hamilcar administered to Hannibal."<sup>1</sup> To many it was the final appeal that settled them in their patriotism. For history the scene has been called the beginning of the Revolution.

Yet it had no immediate results, for Hutchinson — and the service was forgotten by neither his friends nor his opponents — secured delay of judgment in the case until the English courts could uphold him against his wavering associates. Nevertheless, it is safe to assume that the public indignation secured moderate measures on the part of the customs officials, since we hear of few complaints. And the affair had its influence on the public attitude toward the Stamp Act, five years later.

The Stamp Act was the first definite assertion of the right to tax America. In 1763 the Sugar Act had been reenacted, but its provisions, taxing only importations from foreign colonies, yielded little revenue. The

<sup>1</sup> "Memorial History of Boston," iii, 7.

king's treasury was already feeling the drains upon it, and a pack of eager office-seekers was clamoring to be let loose upon the revenues of the colonies. Together the king and his friends pushed through Parliament the legislation which was to secure their purposes. To meet any such danger as in the recent French and Indian wars, ten thousand soldiers were to be quartered on the colonies, which were to pay for their maintenance. Certain sops to public sentiment were given, in the shape of concessions, yet new restrictions were laid on foreign trade. And finally and most important, a stamp-tax, the easiest to collect, was laid on business and legal formalities of all kinds. After its passage no land title might be passed, no legal papers issued, no ship might clear from a home port, without a stamp affixed to the necessary documents. Not even inheritances might be transferred, nor marriages be legalized.

This was the first internal taxation laid by England on America. A word is necessary as to the meaning of the phrase in those

days. An external tax, perhaps merely an export duty, was levied and paid in England; its effect was seen in higher prices in the colonies. Internal taxation would include all taxes actually paid in America on goods coming from England. The provisions of the Sugar Act were regarded as "trade restrictions," and not as intended to raise an English revenue.

There is perhaps no better place to discuss the justice of the Revolution than right here. Even to-day the illegality, the utter wrongfulness of the American position, is occasionally raised among us by those who see the great obligations to the mother country under which the colonies lay, and who recall the needless hardships suffered by the wretched Tories, the martyrs of a lost cause. Doubtless wrongs were inflicted in the course of the struggle, and the great expenditures of England were in large part unrequited. But it must be remembered that the world had not yet reached the point where the losers in a war were gently treated, and that no amount



of financial obligation will ever compel to the acceptance of political servitude. By habit of mind and force of circumstances America had developed a political theory puzzlingly novel to the old world and as yet not thoroughly understood by the new. It was upon this unformulated theory that all future differences were to arise. It interfered in all affairs in which the question arose: Should the colonies be governed, and especially should they be taxed, without a voice in their own affairs?

No one in England doubted that Parliament had a right to tax America without its consent. Customs restrictions were long familiar. As to internal taxation, why, it was asked, should the colonies have a voice in Parliament? Birmingham and Manchester, great centres of population, were not represented, while that uninhabited heap of stones, Old Sarum, sent a member to the Commons. Resting on these abuses, even Pitt and Burke were content to argue that taxation of America was just. For them it was a question whether that right should be exercised.

With the best will in the world to be on good terms with the mother country, America could not agree in such reasoning. The case had nothing to do with obligations. As for these, the colonists knew that England would never have won against the French in Canada without their aid. But that was not the question. Should those who for a hundred and thirty-five years had paid no tax to England pay one now? Were the people who for seventy years had drawn a fine distinction between paying their governor of their own accord and paying him at the command of the king, and who in every year of royal governorship had made their contention plain — were they to be satisfied to pay taxes because Birmingham did?

Undoubtedly there were other causes for discontent. "To me," says Sabine, in the preface to his "American Loyalists," "the documentary history, the state papers of the period teach nothing more clearly than this, namely, that almost every matter brought into discussion was practical, and in some

form or other related to LABOR, to some branch of COMMON INDUSTRY." He reminds us that twenty-nine laws limited industry in the colonies, and concludes that "the great object of the Revolution was to release LABOR from these restrictions." Undoubtedly these restrictive laws had their effect upon the temper of the people. Undoubtedly also there was much fear lest there should be established in the colonies a bureaucracy of major and minor officials, corruptly, as in England, winning fortunes for themselves. Yet the question of taxation, a matter of merely theoretical submission, which produced no hardship and would not impoverish the country, was the main cause of trouble. The two branches of the race had long unconsciously parted their ways, and the realization of it was upon them.

Upon the proposal of the Stamp Act the colonies did everything in their power to prevent the passage of the bill. They urged that internal taxation had never been levied before. Protests, arguments, and petitions were sent across the water, but in vain. The

Commons fell back upon its custom "to receive no petition against a money bill," and would listen to nothing. "We have the power to tax them, and we will tax them."<sup>1</sup> And following this utterance of one of the ministry, the bill was passed.

It is interesting to note that no resistance to the tax was expected. Its operation was automatic; there was no hardship in its provisions; of course the colonists would yield. Even Franklin, who should have known his countrymen better, expected submission. "The sun is down," he wrote, but "we may still light candles. Frugality and industry will go a great way toward indemnifying us." His correspondent, Charles Thomson, had in this case the truer foresight, and predicted the works of darkness.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the colonies there was not only sorrow, but anger. When even Hutchinson had protested against the Stamp Act,

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft's "United States," v, 247.

<sup>2</sup> Fiske, "American Revolution," illustrated edition, i, 17.



it can be seen how the Whigs would feel. Non-importation agreements were widely signed, and people accustomed to silks and laces prepared to go into homespun. But the act, passed in February, 1765, was not to go into effect until November. Before that date, much could be done.

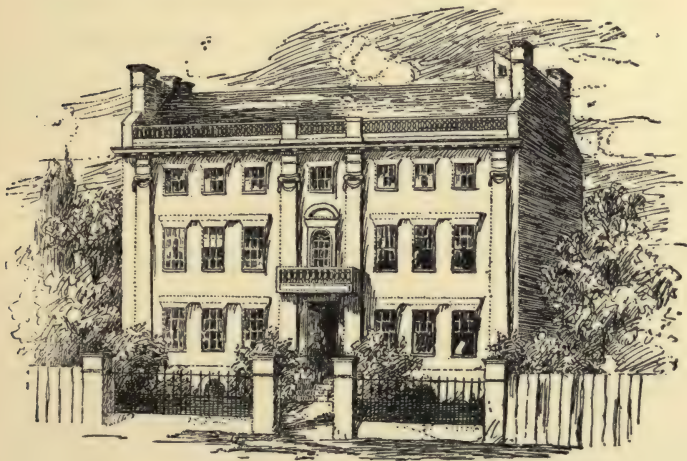
What was done came from the lower as well as the upper classes. The people acted promptly. One colony after another sent crowds to those who had accepted, in advance, the positions of stamp-officers. One by one, under persuasion or intimidation, the officers resigned until none were left. In New York the governor fled to the military for protection, and from the parapet of the fort looked helplessly on while the people burnt before his eyes his own coach, containing images of himself and the devil. But before this happened, Boston, first of all the capitals to take a positive stand, began to draw upon itself the particular resentment of the king.

Early in August came to Boston the news of the nomination of its stamp-collector,

Andrew Oliver, long prominent upon the Tory side. The lower class of the inhabitants, after a week of delay, stirred itself to action. On the 14th the image of Oliver was seen hanging on the bough of a large elm, then known as the Great Tree. Hutchinson ordered the image down, but as the sheriff did not act, Bernard summoned his council, and until evening fruitlessly endeavored to urge them to action. Then the populace, having themselves removed the image, came to the Town House, and, passing directly through it, shouted to the council, still sitting upstairs, "Liberty, property, and no stamps!" Proceeding with perfect order, the crowd next tore down the frame of a building which Oliver was suspected of raising to use as his office, and, carrying the beams to Fort Hill, burnt them and the image before Oliver's house.

Hutchinson, who never lacked personal courage, called on the militia colonel to summon his men and disperse the crowd, but the colonel replied that his drummers were in the mob. Hutchinson then went with the

sheriff to order the crowd to disperse, but was himself forced to depart in order to escape violence. The next day Bernard, the governor, whose courage left him at the very thought of another such night, fled to Castle



THE HUTCHINSON HOUSE

William, behind whose ancient walls he considered himself safe. Oliver hastily resigned his office, lest the mob should visit him again.

The people were not satisfied with the conduct of Hutchinson, who, although he had actually opposed the passage of the

Stamp Act, was under suspicion of secretly abetting and profiting by it. After twelve days there was a second outbreak; the mob began by burning the records of the vice-admiralty court, went on to invade the house of the comptroller of customs, and finally, worked to the usual pitch of a mob's courage, attacked Hutchinson's house. With his family he escaped, but the mob broke into the handsome mansion, and sacked it thoroughly. His library, with priceless manuscripts concerning the history of the colony, was scattered in the mud of the street.

This was the most disgraceful event that happened in Boston during all the long period preceding the Revolution. It was due to popular feeling, wrongly directed; and to new working-men's organizations, not as yet understanding the task that was before them. These organizations, as yet almost formless, and never so important that records were kept, called themselves the Sons of Liberty, after a phrase used by Isaac Barre, in a speech in Parliament opposing the Stamp Act. The



tree on which they had hung the image of Oliver was from this time called Liberty Tree.

The better class of Boston citizens at once, in a town meeting called the following morning, declared their "detestation of these violent proceedings," and promised to suppress them in future. We shall see that one more such outbreak, and one only, was made by a Boston mob. There is here suggested an unwritten, perhaps never to be written, chapter of the history of this time. By what means did the Boston leaders, Samuel Adams chief among them, manage to control the Boston workmen? However it was done, by what conferences and through what reasoning, it is safe to say that the loose organizations of the Sons of Liberty, and still another set of clubs, the caucuses which met in various parts of the town, were utilized to control the lower classes. We know the names of a few of the leaders of the workmen: Edes the printer, Crafts the painter, and, most noted of them all, Paul Revere the silversmith. These sturdy men, and others in different

trades, were the means of transmitting to the artisans of Boston the thoughts and desires of the upper-class Whigs. The organization was looser than that of a political party of to-day, but as soon as it was completed, it produced a subordination, secrecy, and self-control which cannot be paralleled in modern times.

( The opposition to the Stamp Act continued. More formidable than mobs were the actions of the town meetings and legislatures. Protests and declarations were solemnly drawn up; for the first time was heard the threat of disaffection. Representatives from nine provinces met in the Stamp Act Congress, and passed resolutions against the new taxation.

( It was impossible for England to ignore the situation. Reluctantly — it was an act which the king never forgot nor forgave — more than a year after its passage, when it was proved that its enforcement was impossible, the Stamp Act was repealed.

( This was the time for England to change

her whole policy. Not Boston alone, but all America, had declared against American taxation. The principles of liberty had again and again been clearly pointed out. Further, there would have been no disgrace in admitting a mistake. The whole colonial question was new in human history, for Roman practice was inadmissible. "The best writers on public law," reasoned Otis, "contain nothing that is satisfactory on the natural rights of colonies. . . . Their researches are often but the history of ancient abuses."<sup>1</sup> The natural rights of man should have been allowed to rule, as in the course of time, with England's other colonies, they came to do.

But, for better or for worse, sides had been taken. Few thought of turning back. In England there were no breaks in the ranks of the king's supporters; in America the office-holding class, the "best families," the people of settled income and vested rights, were as a rule, selfishly or unselfishly, for the king.

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft's "United States," v, 203.

Already "mobocracy," "the faction," "sedition," were familiar terms among them. England was ready to take, and the American Tories were ready to applaud, the next step. And Boston was being marked down as the most obnoxious of the towns of America.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Castle, or Castle William, referred to in this chapter, was the old fort on Castle Island. It was never put to any other use than as a barracks and magazine.



## CHAPTER III

### CHARLES TOWNSHEND, SAM ADAMS, AND THE MASSACRE

UNFORTUNATELY, when the Stamp Act was repealed, the way had been left open for future trouble. The Rockingham ministry, the most liberal which could then be assembled, even in repealing the Stamp Act thought it incumbent upon them to assert, in the Declaratory Act, the right to tax America. The succeeding ministry, called together under the failing Pitt, was the means of reasserting the right. Pitt, too ill to support the labor of leading his party in the Commons, entered the House of Lords as Earl of Chatham, thus acknowledging the eclipse of fame and abilities which in the previous reign had astounded Europe. It was during one of his periods of illness, when he was unable to attend to public affairs,

that a subordinate insubordinately reversed his public policy by proceeding once more to tax America.

Charles Townshend was Chancellor of the Exchequer. It was he who had urged the reënactment of the Sugar Act in 1763, and he now saw opportunity to put through a more radical policy. In violation of all implied pledges, disdaining restraint from his colleagues, this brilliant but unstable politician introduced into Parliament a new bill for raising an American revenue. "I am still,"<sup>1</sup> he declared, "a firm advocate of the Stamp Act. . . . I laugh at the absurd distinction between internal and external taxation. . . . It is a distinction without a difference; if we have a right to impose the one, we have a right to impose the other; the distinction is ridiculous in the sight of everybody, except the Americans."

"Everybody, except the Americans!" The phrase, from an important speech at a critical moment, marks the fact that a world of

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft, vi, 48.

thought divided the two parts of the Empire more truly than did the Atlantic. But not as yet so evidently. It is only in unconscious acknowledgments such as these that we find the English admitting the new classification. In studying the years before and after this event we find the Americans often called Puritans and Oliverians, while the possible rise of a Cromwell among them is admitted. Yet the parallel, though unmistakably apt, and containing a serious warning, was never taken to heart, even in America.

Americans were very slow in approaching the conclusion that colonists had irrefragable rights. Caution and habit and pride in the name of Englishman kept them from it; the colonist, visiting England for the first time, still proudly said that he was going "home." There was no reason why this feeling should ever change, if only the spirit of compromise, the basis of the British Constitution, had been kept in mind by Parliament. But the times were wrong. Hesitate as the colonists might before the syllogism which

lay ready for completion, its minor and major premises were already accepted. That they were Englishmen, and that Englishmen had inalienable rights, were articles of faith among them. The conclusion would be drawn as soon as they were forced to it. And Townshend was preparing to force them.

Townshend proposed small duties on lead, paints, glass, and paper. Besides this, he withdrew the previous export duty, one shilling per pound, on tea taken from England to America, and instead of this he laid an import duty of threepence per pound. This was ingeniously new, being internal taxation in a form different from that of the Stamp Act. At the same time was abandoned the ancient contention that customs duties were but trade regulations. The new taxes were obviously to raise an English revenue. For the execution of the new laws provision was made in each colony for collectors to be paid directly by the king, but indirectly by the colonies. The head of these collectors was a board of Commissioners of



the Customs, stationed at Boston. It will be seen that thus were begun new irritations for the colonies, in the shape of duties for the benefit of England, and of a corps of officials whose dependence on the crown made sure that they would be subservient tools.

While this was done, no change was made in the plan to maintain in America an army at colonial expense. Indeed, New York was punished for refusing to supply to the troops quartered in the city supplies that had been illegally demanded. Its assembly was not allowed to proceed with public business until the supplies should be voted. Thus every other colony was notified what to expect.

The Revenue Acts were passed in July, 1767. Upon receiving the news the colonies expressed to each other their discontent. Concerning the Customs Commissioners Boston felt the greatest uneasiness. "We shall now," wrote Andrew Eliot, "be obliged to maintain in luxury sycophants, court parasites, and hungry dependents." The strongest expression upon the general situation was

in Dickinson's "Farmer's Letters."<sup>1</sup> "This," said he, "is an INNOVATION, and a most dangerous innovation. We being obliged to take commodities from Great Britain, special duties upon their exportation to us are as much taxes as those imposed by the Stamp Act. Great Britain claims and exercises the right to prohibit manufactures in America. Once admit that she may lay duties upon her exportations to us, for the purpose of levying money on us only, she will then have nothing to do but to lay those duties on the articles which she prohibits us to manufacture, and the tragedy of American liberty is finished."

There was but one way to meet the situation. In October the town of Boston resolved, through its town meeting, to import none of the dutiable articles. The example was followed by other towns until all the colonies had entered, unofficially, into a non-importation agreement. The question arose, What further should be done? Otis was beginning his mental decline. It was now that Samuel Adams,

<sup>1</sup> Farmer's Letters, quoted in Bancroft, vi, 105.

or Sam Adams, as Boston better loves to call him, came into the leadership which he ever after exercised.

He was a man of plain Boston ancestry, whose father had interested himself in public affairs, and who, like his son, was of doubtful business ability. Sam Adams's interests were evident from his boyhood, and when in 1743 he took his degree of Master of Arts at Harvard, he presented a thesis on the subject: "Whether it be Lawful to resist the Supreme Magistrate, if the Commonwealth cannot otherwise be preserved." Although he inherited a little property from his father, and although from the year 1753 he served constantly in public offices, up to the year 1764 he had scarcely been a success. His patrimony had largely disappeared; further, as tax-collector he stood, with his associates, indebted to the town for nearly ten thousand pounds. The reason for this is not clear; the fact has been used to his disadvantage by Tory historians, the first of them being Hutchinson, who calls the situation a "de-

falcation." But in order to feel sure that the state of affairs was justified by circumstances, we need only to consider that in the same year Adams was chosen by the town on the committee to "instruct" its representatives, and a year later was himself made a legislator. From that time on, his influence in Boston and Massachusetts politics steadily grew.

His political sentiments were never in doubt. In his "instructions" of 1764 are found the words: "If Taxes are laid upon us in any shape without our having a legal representative where they are laid, are we not reduced from the Character of free Subjects to the miserable State of tributary Slaves?"<sup>1</sup> Throughout the Stamp Act agitation he was active in opposing the new measures. He was found to be ready with his tongue, but especially so with his pen. For this reason he was constantly employed by the town and the Assembly to draft their resolutions, and some of the most momentous documents of

<sup>1</sup> Hosmer, "Life of Samuel Adams," 48.



the period remain to us in his handwriting. When at last, at the beginning of 1768, some one was needed to express the opinion of Massachusetts upon the Townshend Acts, Samuel Adams was naturally looked to as the man for the work.

He drafted papers which were, one after the other, adopted by the Massachusetts Assembly. The first was a letter of remonstrance, addressed to the colony's agent in London, and intended to be made public. It protested, in words seven times revised by the Assembly, against the proposed measures. Similar letters were sent to members of the ministry and leaders of English opinion. Another letter was addressed to the king. Of the success of this, Adams apparently had little hope, for when his daughter remarked that the paper might be touched by the royal hand, he replied, "More likely it will be spurned by the royal foot." The final one of these state papers was a circular letter addressed to "each House of Representatives or Burgesses on the continent." This expressed

the opinion of Massachusetts upon the new laws, and invited discussion. That nothing in this should be considered underhanded, a copy of the circular letter was sent to England.

It is significant that at the same time the new revenue commission sent a secret letter to England, protesting against New England town meetings, "in which the lowest mechanics discussed the most important points of government with the utmost freedom,"<sup>1</sup> and asking for troops.

This begins the series of misrepresentations and complaints which, constantly sent secretly to England, became a leading cause of trouble. The working of the old colonial system is here seen in its perfection. Believing in the right to tax and punish, the Ministry appointed officers of the same belief. These men, finding themselves in hot water in Boston, were annoyed and perhaps truly alarmed, and constantly urged harsher measures and the sending of troops. The ministry, listening to its own supporters, and disbelieving the

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft's "United States," vi, 128.

assertions of the American Whigs, more and more steadily inclined toward severity.

Perhaps no falser idea was created than that Boston was riotous. Says Fiske: "Of all the misconceptions of America by England which brought about the American Revolution, perhaps this notion of the turbulence of Boston was the most ludicrous." One of the most serious also. The chief cause was in the timorousness of Bernard, the governor. On the occasion of the anniversary of the repeal of the Stamp Act, when, as Hutchinson said, "We had only such a mob as we have long been used to on the Fifth of November," Bernard wrote that there was "a disposition to the utmost disorder." As a crowd reached his house, "There was so terrible a yell it was apprehended they were breaking in. It was not so; however, it caused the same terror as if it had been so." That such a letter should have any effect on home opinion is, as Fiske says, ludicrous. Yet the mischief caused by these reports is incalculable. "It is the bare truth," says

Trevelyan, "that his own Governors and Lieutenant-Governors wrote King George out of America."<sup>1</sup>

Another little series of incidents at this time shows the official disposition to magnify reports of trouble. For some weeks the ship of war *Romney* had lain in the harbor, summoned by the commissioners of customs. That the ship should be summoned was in itself an offence to the town; but the conduct of the captain, in impressing seamen in the streets of Boston, was worse. Bad blood arose between the ship's crew and the long-shoremen; one of the impressed men was rescued, but the captain angrily refused to accept a substitute for another. Trouble was brought to a head by the seizure, on the order of the commissioners of customs, of John Hancock's sloop, the *Liberty*, on alleged violation of regulations. Irritated by the seizure, and by the fact that the sloop was moored by the side of the *Romney*, a crowd threatened the customs house officers,

<sup>1</sup> "American Revolution," Part I, 43.



broke the comptroller's windows, and, taking a boat belonging to the collector, after parading with it through the streets, burnt it on the Common.

This was the second disturbance in Boston which can be called a riot. But it was of small size and short duration; the influence of the Whig leaders, working through secret channels, quieted the mob, and there was no further trouble. Nevertheless, four of the commissioners of the customs seized the occasion to flee to the *Romney*, and to request of the governor protection in the Castle, declaring that they dared not return. But the remaining commissioner remained undisturbed on shore, and a committee of the council, examining into the matter, found that the affair had been only "a small disturbance." A committee from the Boston town meeting, going in eleven chaises to Bernard at his country seat, secured from him a promise to stop impressments, and a statement of his desire for conciliation. Nevertheless Bernard, Hutchinson, and the various officers of the

customs, used the incident in their letters home to urge that troops were needed in Boston.

This was but an interlude, though an instructive one, in the main course of events. Massachusetts had protested against the new Acts. The next issue arose when the Assembly was directed, by the new colonial secretary, Lord Hillsborough, to rescind its Remonstrance and Circular Letter. The debate on the question was long and important; the demand was refused by a vote of seventeen to ninety-two. The curious can still see, in the Old State House, the punch-bowl that Paul Revere was commissioned to make for the "Immortal Ninety-two;" and there still exist copies of Revere's caricature of the Rescinders, with Timothy Ruggles at their head, being urged by devils into the mouth of hell. These are indications of the feelings of the times. The immediate result was that in June, 1768, Bernard dissolved the house, and Massachusetts was "left without a legislature." Upon the news reaching England,

it was at last resolved to send troops to Boston. The crisis in Massachusetts was now serious. Against the governor and the expected troops stood only the council, with slight powers. Some machinery must be devised to meet the emergency, and the solution of the difficulty was found by Samuel Adams. His mind first leaped to the ultimate remedy for all troubles, and then found the way out of the present difficulty.

The ultimate solution was independence. Though in moments of despondency and exasperation the word had been used by both parties, until now no one had considered independence possible except Samuel Adams. From this period he worked for it, in secret preparing men's minds for the grand change. According to a Tory accusation made in a later year, Adams "confessed that the independence of the colonies had been the great object of his life; that whenever he met a youth of parts he had endeavored to instil such notions into his mind, and had neglected no opportunity, either in public or

in private, of preparing the way for independence.”<sup>1</sup>

Another Tory source, a deposition gathered when the Tories were preparing an accusation against Adams, shows the agitator at work. During the affair of the sloop *Liberty*, “the informant observed several parties of men gathered in the street at the south end of the town of Boston, in the forenoon of the day. The informant went up to one of the parties, and Mr. Samuel Adams, then one of the representatives of Boston, happened to join the same party near about the same time, trembling and in great agitation. . . . The informant heard the said Samuel Adams then say to the same party, ‘If you are men, behave like men. Let us take up arms immediately, and be free, and seize all the king’s officers. We shall have thirty thousand freemen to join us from the country.’”

The statement of the deposition is crude and overdone, yet there can be no doubt that from this time Adams did work for the

<sup>1</sup> Hosmer’s “Life of Adams.”



one great end. At first he was alone, yet he recognized the temper of the continent, and saw the way that the political sentiments of the country were tending. The methods which he followed were not always open; for never did he avow his true sentiments, while often protesting, on behalf of the town or the province, loyalty to the crown. Doubtless he did train the young men up as he saw them inclined. In one case we know that he failed. "Samuel Adams used to tell me," said John Coffin, a Boston Tory, "'Coffin, you must not leave us; we shall have warm work, and want you.'"<sup>1</sup> But in other cases Adams succeeded: one by one John Hancock, Josiah Quincy, Jr., John Adams, and Joseph Warren were by him brought into prominence. And at the same time he began to accustom men's minds to new methods of political activity.

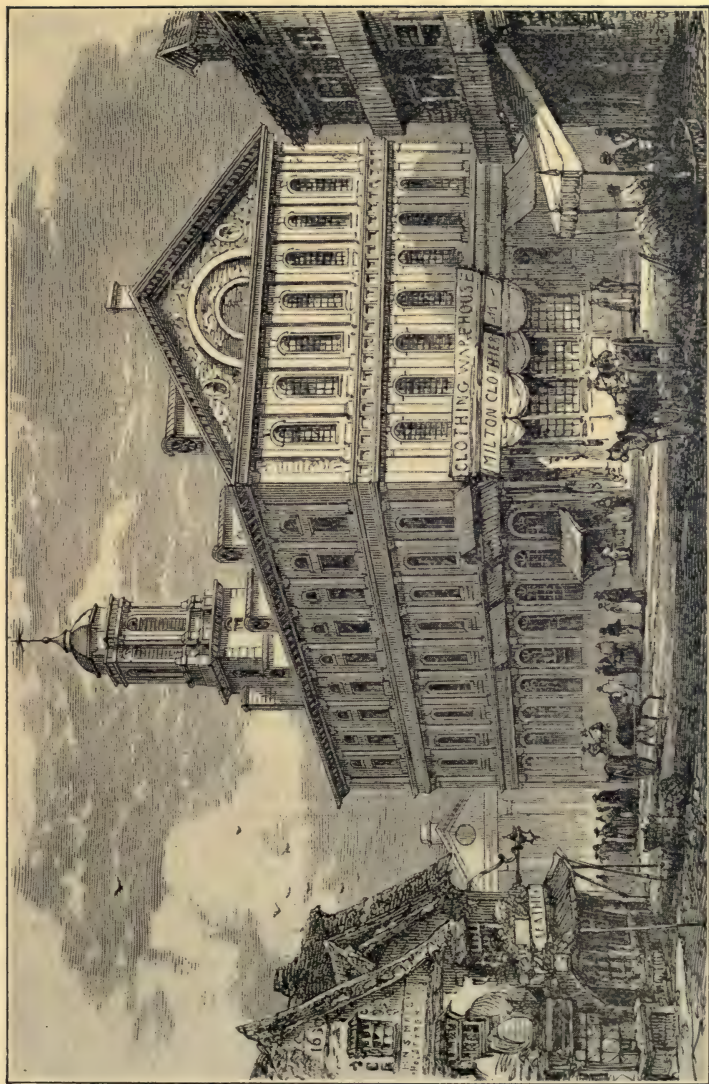
This Adams did in the present difficulty, when, in default of the Assembly, he yet needed an expression of the opinion of the

<sup>1</sup> Sabine's "Loyalists."

province. Through his means was called a convention of the towns of Massachusetts, which met in Faneuil Hall, on the 22d of September, 1768.

The convention was self-restrained. It called upon the governor to convene the Assembly, and approved all the acts which had caused the Assembly's dismissal; it resolved to preserve order, and quietly dissolved itself. "I doubt," said the British Attorney-General, "whether they have committed an overt act of treason, but I am sure they have come within a hair's breadth of it."

Immediately afterwards arrived the ships with troops. These were landed with much parade, to find a peaceful town, yet one which from the first was able to annoy them. Demand was made for quarters for the soldiers; the Selectmen and Council replied by referring to the law which forbade such a requisition until the barracks at Castle William should be filled. By neither subtlety nor threats could the town be induced to yield; the troops camped on the Common until, at



FANEUIL HALL





great expense, the crown officials were forced to hire quarters. It was but the beginning of the discomfort of the troops, openly scorned in a town where three-quarters of the people were against them. Where few women except their own camp-followers would have to do with the soldiers, where the men despised them and the boys jeered, where "lobster-back" was the mildest term that was flung at them, there was no satisfaction in wearing the king's uniform.

Eighteen months of this life wore upon the soldiers. The townsfolk became adepts at subtle irritations, against which there was not even the solace of interesting occupation; for except for daily drill there was nothing to do. In time the more violent among the troops were ripe for any affray; while the lower classes among the inhabitants, stanch Whigs and sober livers, were sick of the noisy ribaldry which for so long had made unpleasant the streets of the town. Out of these conditions grew what has been called the Boston Massacre.

The best contemporary, and in fact the best general authority for this event is the "Short Narrative of the Horrid Massacre in Boston." This was published by the town for circulation in England, and is still extant in Doggett's reprint of 1849, and in Kidder's of 1870. In a report of a special committee the town rehearses both the events of the Massacre and the proceedings which followed it. Seventy-two pages of depositions are appended to the report of the committee: no other single event of those days is made so vivid to us.

The Massacre was preceded by minor disturbances. On the second of March, 1770, insults having passed between a soldier and a ropemaker, the former came to the ropewalk, "and looking into one of the windows said, *by God I'll have satisfaction!* . . . and at last said he was not afraid of any one in the ropewalks. I" — thus deposes Nicholas Feriter, of lawful age, "stept out of the window and speedily knocked up his heels. On falling, his coat flew open, and a naked sword ap-

peared, which one John Willson, following me out, took from him, and brought into the ropewalks." The soldier returned a second and a third time, each time with more men from his regiment. At the last they were "headed by a tall negro drummer, with a cutlass chained to his body, with which, at first rencounter," says valiant Nicholas, "I received a cut on the head, but being immediately supported by nine or ten more of the ropemakers, armed with their wouldring sticks, we again beat them off."

For three days there was, among the two regiments stationed in the town, anger which the inhabitants endeavored to allay by the discharge of the ropemaker who gave the original insult, and by agreements made with the commanding officer, Colonel Dalrymple. But, as afterwards appeared, there were warnings of further trouble. Cautions were given to friends of the soldiers not to go on the streets at night. The soldiers and their women could not refrain from dark hints of violence to come. It is even possible that

violence was concerted. On the night of the fifth a number of soldiers assembled in Atkinson Street. "They stood very still until the guns were fired in King Street, then they clapped their hands and gave a cheer, saying, 'This is all that we want'; they then ran to their barracks and came out again in a few minutes, all with their arms, and ran toward King Street." "I never," so runs other testimony, "saw men or dogs so greedy for their prey as these soldiers seemed to be."

But the affray was of small proportions, and soon over. The actual outbreak originated in a quarrel between a barber's boy and a sentry, stationed in King Street below the east end of the Town House.<sup>1</sup> Boys and men gathered, the sentry called out the guard, fire-bells were rung, and the crowd increased. The captain of the guard was not the man for the emergency. Said Henry Knox, afterward general and Secretary of War, "I took Captain Preston by the coat

<sup>1</sup> King Street is now State Street, and the Town House is the Old State House.



and told him for God's sake to take his men back again, for if they fired his life must answer for the consequence; he replied he was sensible of it, or knew what he was about, or words to that purpose; and seemed in great haste and much agitated." The gathering still increased, there was crowding and jostling, snowballs and possibly sticks were thrown; the soldiers grew angry and the officer uncertain what to do. "The soldiers," testified John Hickling, "assumed different postures, shoving their bayonets frequently at the people, one in particular pushing against my side swore he would run me through; I laid hold of his bayonet and told him that nobody was going to meddle with them. Not more than ten seconds after this I saw something white, resembling a piece of snow or ice, fall among the soldiers, which knocked the end of a firelock to the ground. At that instant the word 'Fire!' was given, but by whom I know not; but concluded it did not come from the officer aforesaid, as I was within a yard of him and must have

heard him had he spoken it, but am satisfied said Preston did not forbid them to fire; I instantly leaped within the soldier's bayonet as I heard him cock his gun, which that moment went off. . . . I, thinking there was nothing but powder fired, stood still, till . . . I saw another gun fired, and the man since called Attucks, fall. I then withdrew about two or three yards. . . . During this the rest of the guns were fired, one after another, when I saw two more fall. . . . I further declare that I heard no other affront given them than the huzzaing and whistling of boys in the street."

After the firing, other soldiers were summoned to the spot, and more townspeople appeared. The soldiers, says the official narrative, "were drawn up between the State House and main guard, their lines extended across the street and facing down King Street, where the town people were assembled. The first line kneeled, and the whole of the first platoon presented their guns ready to fire, as soon as the word should be given. . . . For

some time the appearance of things were dismal. The soldiers outrageous on the one hand, and the inhabitants justly incensed against them on the other: both parties seemed disposed to come to action."

Had the affair gone further, so that the soldiers fired again, or the townspeople stormed the barracks, then the affray would have resembled the riots not uncommon in Europe at that time, and known even in England. In such a case the turbulence of Boston might have been proved. But the good town was later able to claim that up to the actual breaking out of hostilities not one soldier or Tory had been harmed in Massachusetts. In the present case nothing further happened. The stubborn people stood their ground, but the eager troops were restrained and led away. The punishment of the offenders took place according to law, with John Adams and Josiah Quincy, Jr., leaders of the Whigs, as successful defenders of the captain.

The important consequences were political. Though the people dispersed that night, they

assembled on the morrow in a crowded town meeting, where Samuel Adams guided the actions of the assembly. Adjourning from Faneuil Hall to the Old South, which itself could not accommodate them all, the throng passed the very spot of the Massacre and under the windows of the State House, where the lieutenant-governor viewed them. This man was Hutchinson, acting governor in the absence of Bernard, and at last about to arrive at the goal of colonial ambition.

Thomas Hutchinson has been too much condemned, and of late years almost too much commended. He had spent thirty years in the service of the colony, holding more offices, and more at the same time, than any man of his generation. Now he was unpopular and misjudged, yet he was a man for his day and party honest and patriotic; his end, in exile in England, was one of the tragedies of American loyalty. But though a braver man than Bernard and more public-spirited, his methods were equally underhanded, and he fatally mistook the capacity



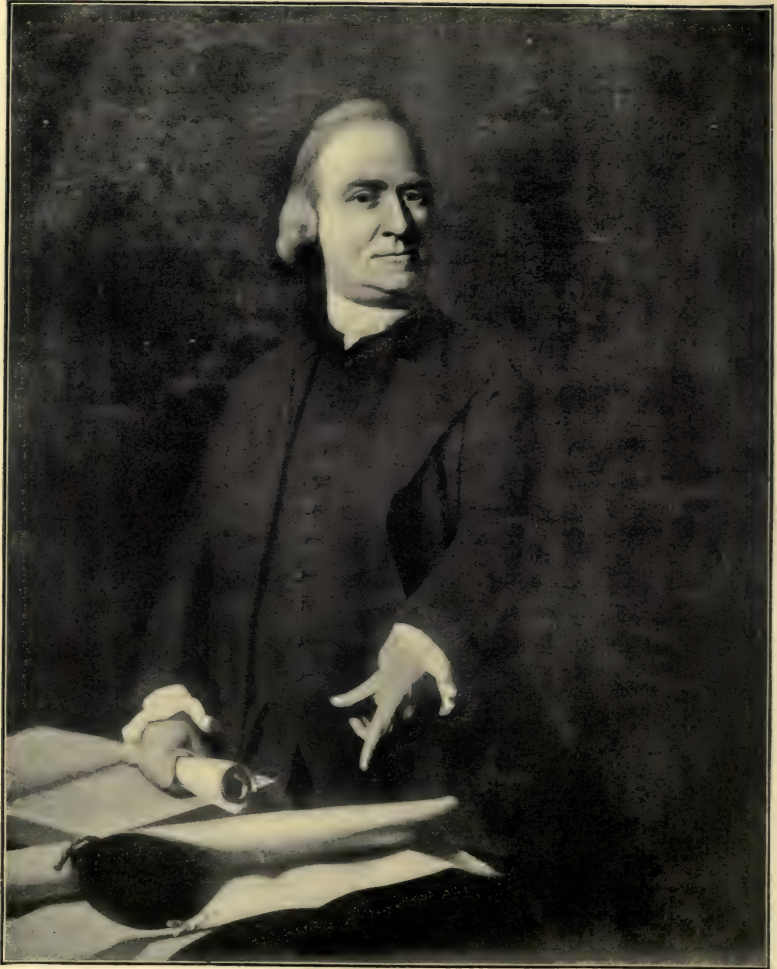
of his countrymen to govern themselves. A man who could wish for less freedom of speech in England was not the man to sympathize with the spirit of Americans.

He now, backed by a few councillors and officials, was to face Sam Adams and the Boston town meeting. With a committee from the meeting, Adams came to the State House to demand the withdrawal of the troops to the Castle. Hutchinson answered that he would withdraw one regiment, but had not the power to remove both. Retiring at the head of his committee, Adams passed through a lane of people on his way to the Old South. "Both regiments or none!" he said right and left as he passed, and every one took up the word. "Both regiments or none!" cried the meeting. Voting his report unsatisfactory, it sent him back to the governor to repeat his demand.

"Now for the picture," wrote John Adams many years after. "The theatre and the scenery are the same with those at the discussion of the writs of assistance. The same

glorious portraits of King Charles the Second, and King James the Second, to which might be added, and should be added, little miserable likenesses of Governor Winthrop, Governor Bradstreet, Governor Endicott, and Governor Belcher, hung up in obscure corners of the room. Lieutenant-Governor Hutchinson, commander-in-chief in the absence of the governor, must be placed at the head of the council-table. Lieutenant-Colonel Dalrymple, commander of his majesty's military forces, taking rank of all his majesty's councillors, must be seated by the side of the lieutenant-governor and commander-in-chief of the Province. Eight-and-twenty councillors must be painted, all seated at the council-board. Let me see, — what costume? What was the fashion of that day in the month of March? Large white wigs, English scarlet-cloth coats, some of them with gold-laced hats; not on their heads indeed in so august a presence, but on the table before them or under the table beneath them. Before these illustrious persons appeared SAMUEL ADAMS,





1722 — SAMUEL ADAMS — 1803

By John Singleton Copley



a member of the House of Representatives and their clerk, now at the head of the committee of the great assembly at the Old South Church.”<sup>1</sup>

It is this moment that Copley chose to represent Adams. Facing the governor, the officers, and the councillors, Adams stood in his simple “wine-colored suit,” and appealed to the charter and the laws. “If you have power to remove one regiment, you have power to remove both. It is at your peril if you do not. The meeting is composed of three thousand people. They are become very impatient. A thousand men are already arrived from the neighborhood, and the country is in general motion. Night is approaching; an immediate answer is expected.”<sup>2</sup>

Hutchinson was a man learned in the history of the province and the people, and the occasion had impressed him already. As the meeting had passed under his windows on the way to the Old South, a friend at his

<sup>1</sup> Hosmer's “Samuel Adams,” 172.

<sup>2</sup> Bancroft, vi, 344.



side had remarked that this was not the kind of men that had sacked his house. He had noted the resolute countenances of the best men of the town, and had — to use his own words — judged their spirit to be as strong, and their resolve as high, as those of the men who had imprisoned Andros. Adams, narrowly watching him now, marked the tumult in Hutchinson's mind.

"I observed his knees to tremble," said Adams afterward; "I saw his face grow pale; and I enjoyed the sight."<sup>1</sup> For Hutchinson, poorly supported and irresolute, the strain was too great. He temporized and parleyed, but he thought again of Andros, and gave way. It was a complete triumph for the town. The troops, until their removal to the Castle could be effected, were virtually imprisoned in their barracks by a patrol of citizens. From that time they bore the name of the "Sam Adams regiments."

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft, vi, 345.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE TEA-PARTY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

**S**TEP by step the mother country and its colonies were advancing to a rupture.

The first step was taken at the test concerning the writs of assistance, the second at the passage of the Stamp Act and its repeal, the third resulted in the Massacre and the withdrawal of the troops from Boston. Each time the colonies gained the practical advantages which they sought; each time the king's party, while yielding, became more exasperated, and presently tested the strength of the colonies once more; and each time it was Boston that stood as the head and front of opposition. The town was marked for martyrdom.

In the case of the Townshend Acts, the victory of the colonists was temporarily complete. The movement had come to a head at

Boston in an actual outbreak, the Massacre, which obscured the greater issues; nevertheless the issues were won. America would not submit to the new revenue laws. Very calmly it had avoided them by refusing to import from England. A thorough test of nearly two years showed that from north to south the colonies were almost a unit in rejecting English and foreign goods, and in relying on home manufactures. From importations of more than a million and a quarter pounds, ~~two~~ thirds fell clean away,<sup>1</sup> and the merchants of England felt the pinch. There was but one thing to do, and England grudgingly did it. The withdrawal of the troops from Boston was acquiesced in, and the revenue acts, the cause of all the trouble, were repealed, except for a duty still maintained upon tea.

The response was such that England was relieved. New York began to import those articles which had been made free of duty. The non-importation agreement was broken,

<sup>1</sup> Trevelyan, "American Revolution," Part I, 104.



as the colonies perceived. "You had better send us your old liberty pole," wrote Philadelphia scornfully to New York, "since you clearly have no further use for it."<sup>1</sup> Whigs and Tories both saw that, the agreement thus broken, other colonies would follow the example of New York.

The advantage was now clearly with the king, and he endeavored to make the most of it, not by abiding in peace, but by taking a further step. He ordered that colonial judges should in future be paid from the English treasury. No one in the colonies could fail to see that the blow was aimed directly at the independence of the judiciary.

Massachusetts was alarmed. Boston sent resolutions to the governor, but Hutchinson, now at last in the chair, refused to listen to the town meeting. In this moment of indignation, Samuel Adams conceived a scheme which was the longest step yet taken toward independence.

<sup>1</sup> "A Card from the Inhabitants of Philadelphia," Bancroft, vi, 366.

This was the idea of Committees of Correspondence, to be permanently maintained by each town and even by each colony. The idea of such committees was not novel. It had been suggested years before by Jonathan Mayhew, and had more than once been used in emergencies. But permanent committees, watching affairs and at any time ready to act, were new. Naturally composed of the best men in each town, they would at all times be ready to speak, and to speak vigorously. The plan, when perfected, eventually enabled the colonies to act as a unit. From the first it gave strength to the Americans; in the present instance it spread the news of the king's action and roused indignation, and before long it brought about an act which startled the English-speaking world.

This was the Boston Tea-Party. The king had a hand in making the fire hot. He had been vexed by his unsuccessful tariff, and was now especially irritated that his concessions had brought about no result in one important particular.

Until the present every shipmaster had been a smuggler, and all the Whigs dealt in smuggled goods. This was according to old English practice, but as a matter of fact illicit trade was more decorous in America than in England. Whereas in Cornwall the forces of the smugglers were so strong that they chased the revenue cutters into harbors and landed their goods by bright moonlight, in America the appearances of legality were gravely preserved.

Nevertheless the result was the same, and in one quarter was actually serious. The recent tariff had brought to the royal treasury scarcely three hundred pounds from tea. The situation was no better now that the tea-duty was the only one remaining. So completely did America, while still drinking tea in quantity, avoid the duly imported article, that the revenue of the East India Company fell off alarmingly. On pathetic representations of the financial state of the company, the king gave permission, through a subservient Parliament, for the company to export

tea to America free even of the English duty. The company had lost hundreds of thousands of pounds since the Townshend Acts went in force; now by favorable terms it was to be enabled to undersell in the colonial market even the smuggled teas. Taking advantage of this new ruling, tea was promptly shipped, in the autumn of 1773, to different consignees in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston.

It was confidently expected that the colonies would buy the tea. No one in the government supposed that the Americans would be blind to their own interests. This much, indeed, was admitted by the leaders among the Whigs, that once the tea was on sale Yankee principle might be sorely tempted by Yankee thrift. Indignant at the insidious temptation, determined that no such test should be made, and resenting the establishment of a practical monopoly throughout the colonies, the leaders resolved that the tea should not be landed.

It is an odd fortune that connected the



Chinese herb so closely with the struggle of principle in America. To this day, while the issues are obscured in the mind of the average American, he remembers the tax on tea, and that his ancestors would not pay it. Picturesque tales of ladies' associations depriving themselves of their favorite beverage, of men tarring and feathering unpopular tradesmen, have survived the hundred and thirty odd years which have passed since then; and the impression is general that the colonists would not pay a tax which bore heavy on them. But it will be noticed by those who have attentively read this account that the colonists were refusing to pay less, in order that they might have the satisfaction of paying more. They balked, not at the amount of the tax, but at its principle.

In the case of the tea-ships the duty of action fell upon Boston. Charleston and Philadelphia had taken a positive stand resolving not to receive the tea; but the ships were due at Boston first. The eyes of the

continent were upon this one town. Boston made ready to act, yet of the preparations we know nothing. While the story as it is told is interesting enough, there is no record of the secret meetings in which the events were prepared. Hints are dropped, and it is asserted that within the Green Dragon tavern, a favorite meeting-place of the Whigs, were finally decided the means by which the workmen of the town should carry out the plans of the leaders. But of these meetings nothing is positively known; all we can say with certainty is that the plans worked perfectly, and that Sam Adams must have had a hand in their making.

The Sons of Liberty took the first step toward forcing the consignees of the tea to resign. "Handbills are stuck up," writes John Andrews, "calling upon Friends! Citizens! and Countrymen!" To Liberty Tree the "freemen of Boston and the neighboring towns" were invited, by placard and advertisement, "to hear the persons, to whom the tea shipped by the East India Company is

consigned, make a public resignation of their office as consignees, upon oath.”<sup>1</sup>

But the consignees did not come, though the freemen did. The townspeople, forming themselves into a “meeting,” sent a committee to the consignees, demanding that they refuse to receive the tea. But the consignees believed themselves safe. They were merchants of family and property, the governor’s sons were among them, and it was rumored that Hutchinson had a pecuniary interest in the success of the venture. They refused to give the pledge.

The official town meeting now took up the matter. Before the tea arrived, and again after the appearance of the first ship, the town called upon the consignees to resign. Each time the consignees refused. The second town meeting, after thus acting in vain, dissolved without the customary expression of opinion. Hutchinson himself records that “this sudden dissolution struck more terror into the consignees than the most minatory

<sup>1</sup> “Memorial History of Boston,” iii, 45.

resolves." From that moment the matter was in the hands of the Boston Committee of Correspondence.

By means of the committee, at whose head was Adams, communication was held with the towns throughout Massachusetts. The province was greatly excited, and repeated demands for resignation were made upon the consignees, but they clung to their offices and the hope of profit. Delays were skilfully secured, and the first ship was entered at the customs, after which according to law it must within twenty days either clear for England or land its cargo. The governor was resolved not to grant a clearance, and rejoiced over his opponents. "They find themselves," he said, "in invincible difficulties."

But everything was prepared. To the last minute of the twenty days the Whigs were patient. Petition after petition, appeal after appeal, went to the governor or the consignees. There was no success. On the last day, the 16th of December, 1773, all



three of the tea-ships were at Griffin's Wharf, watched by the patriots. A town meeting, the largest in the history of Boston, crowded the Old South, and again resolved that the tea should not be landed. "Who knows," asked John Rowe, "how tea will mingle with salt water?" The remark was greeted with cheers, yet one more legal step might be taken, and the meeting, sending Rotch, the master of the first tea-ship, to the governor at Milton to ask for a clearance, patiently waited while he should traverse the fifteen miles of his journey. During the hours of his absence there was no disturbance; when he returned, the daylight had gone, and the Old South was lighted with candles. Seven thousand people were silent to hear the report. It was brief, and its meaning was clear: the governor had refused; the last legal step had been taken. Then Samuel Adams rose.

"This meeting," he declared, "can do nothing more to save the country."

It was the expected signal. Immediately

there was a shout from the porch, and the warwhoop sounded out of doors. The meeting poured out of doors and followed some fifty men in the garb of Indians, who suddenly appeared in the street. They hurried to Griffin's Wharf. There they posted guards, took possession of the tea-ships, and hoisting the chests from the holds, knocked them open and emptied the tea into the water. Under the moon the great crowd watched in silence, there was no interference from the troops or the war-ships, and in three hours the last of the tea was overboard. Nothing remained except what had sifted into the shoes of some of the "Indians," to be preserved as mementoes of the day.

"They say," wrote John Andrews dryly two days later, "that the actors were *Indians* from *Narragansett*. Whether they were or not, to a transient observer they appear'd as *such*, being cloath'd in Blankets with the heads muffled, and copper color'd countenances, being each arm'd with a hatchet or axe, and pair pistols, nor was their *dialect*

different from what I conceive these geniusses to *speak*, as their jargon was unintelligible to all but themselves. Not the least insult was offer'd to any person, save one Captain Conner, a letter of horses in this place, not many years since remov'd from *dear Ireland*, who had ript up the lining of his coat and waist-coat under the arms, and watching his opportunity had nearly fill'd 'em with tea, but being detected, was handled pretty roughly. They not only stripp'd him of his cloaths, but gave him a coat of mud, with a severe bruising into the bargain; and nothing but their utter aversion to make *any* disturbance prevented his being tar'd and feather'd."

Such was the Boston Tea-Party, "the boldest stroke," said Hutchinson, "that had yet been struck in America." Much has been written about it. It has been minimized into a riot, and magnified into a deed of glory. As a matter of fact, it was neither the one nor the other, yet if either it was nearer the latter. Carried out by Boston

mechanics, but doubtless directed by Boston leaders, it was a cool and deliberate law-breaking, the penalty for which, could the offenders but have been discovered, would have been severe. But none of the actors in the affair were betrayed at the time, though hundreds in the town must have had positive knowledge of their identity. Names, like those of the burners of the *Gaspee* eighteen months before, were not given out until after the Revolution, and even to-day the list of them is not complete.

The project of the king and the East India Company was a failure. In one way or other the other three seaports either destroyed or sent back their tea. But Boston was the first and most violent offender. It was on her that punishment was to descend.

~~X~~ The news of the Tea-Party came to England at a time when king and Parliament were less amiably disposed than usual toward Massachusetts. Some weeks before had happened the affair of the Hutchinson letters. Benjamin Franklin, then Postmaster-General



of England, and agent for Massachusetts, had secured possession of certain letters written by Governor Hutchinson and by others in office in the colony. These letters proved beyond doubt that the Massachusetts officials had been secretly urging upon the home government repressive measures against the colony. This was but what Bernard had done, and what had been suspected of his successor; yet the actual proof was too much for Franklin. He sent the letters, under pledge of secrecy, home to be read by the leaders among the Massachusetts Whigs. But the pledge of secrecy could not be kept. The letters were read in the Assembly and then published. "He had written," says Bancroft of Hutchinson, "against every part of the Constitution, the elective character of the Council, the annual choice of the Assembly, the New England organization of the towns; had advised and solicited the total dependence of the judiciary on the Crown, had hinted at making the experiment of declaring Martial Law, and of abrogating English liberty; had

advised to the restraint of the commerce of Boston and the exclusion of the Province from the fisheries."<sup>1</sup> Hutchinson's defence was that he "had never wrote any public or private letter that tends to subvert the Constitution." But he was thinking of the Constitution rather than the Charter. The province was thoroughly roused, and sent to England a firm yet respectful petition demanding his dismissal.

But Hutchinson had been serving the king as the king wished to be served. The wrath of the government fell upon Franklin. In a crowded meeting of the Privy Council, with scant respect for the forms of law, Franklin was subjected to elaborate abuse. There were none to defend him who could gain a respectful hearing; he stood immovable under the tongue-lashing of the Solicitor-General, and made no reply. "I have never," he said afterwards, "been so sensible of the power of a good conscience, for if I had not considered the thing for which I have been

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft, vi, 461, 462.

so much insulted, as one of the best actions of my life, and what I should certainly do again in the same circumstances, I could not have supported it.”<sup>1</sup> The suit which he wore that day he put carefully away, and did not wear it again until as Commissioner for the United States he signed in Paris the treaty of alliance with France.

Franklin was deprived of his office under the crown, and the king who directed the punishment, the council who condemned him, and the Parliament which cheered them both on, were not yet satisfied. When the news of the Tea-Party came, they felt that their chance had come to strike at the real culprit. The king consulted General Gage, who was fresh from Boston, and listened eagerly to his fatally mistaken account of the situation. “He says,” wrote the king to Lord North, “‘They will be lions while we are lambs; but if we take the resolute part they will undoubtedly prove very meek.’ Four regiments sent to Boston will, he thinks, be

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft, vi, 498.

sufficient to prevent any disturbance.”<sup>1</sup> On such a basis the king and his prime minister planned the laws which should punish the town of Boston.

The first act was the Boston Port Bill. It closed the port to all commerce until the East India Company should be paid for its tea, and the king satisfied that the town was repentant. Nothing except food and fuel was to be brought to the town in boats; in fact, as Lord North promised the Commons, Boston was to be removed seventeen miles from the ocean. For Salem was made the port of entry, and there the governor and the collector, the surveyor and the comptroller, and all underlings were to go. It was planned to station war-ships in Boston Harbor to enforce the law.

The second law was the “Bill for the better Regulating the Government of the Massachusetts Bay,” generally called the Regulating Act. This virtually swept away the charter of Massachusetts. It provided first that the

<sup>1</sup> Avery, “History of the United States,” v, 190.



Council was to be appointed by the king, and next that without the consent of the Council the governor might appoint or remove all officers of justice, from judges to constables. By the provisions of the law even the jury lists could be controlled by appointive officers. Finally town meetings were made illegal throughout the province, except for the election of town officers, and other necessary local business.

The third proposal of the government was a bill "for the Impartial Administration of Justice," in proposing which "it was observed that Lord North trembled and faltered at every word of his motion." It provided that magistrates, officers, or soldiers might be tried for "murder, or any other capital offence," in Great Britain.

The fourth act made provision for quartering troops in Boston.

The bills went through Parliament without much opposition. Says Trevelyan, "Even after the lapse of a century and a quarter the debates are not pleasant reading for an Eng-

lishman.”<sup>1</sup> It was assumed that the punishment was just, and that not only Boston but also the whole continent would take it meekly. A few voices were raised in protest, but as a rule even the Opposition was silent. One by one the bills became law. One more step was taken toward separation.

<sup>1</sup> “American Revolution,” Part I, 181.

## CHAPTER V

### THE OCCUPATION OF BOSTON

EARLY in May of 1774 Hutchinson, ostensibly called to England to advise the king, gave up his offices in Massachusetts. His exile was approaching. Never again was he to see the fair hill of Milton, nor to look from its top upon the town and harbor that he loved. The Whigs exulted over the fall of "the damn'd arch traitor;" yet surely, though as an official he failed in his task, and as a patriot misread the temper and the capacity of his countrymen, he commands our pity. Amid the booming of the cannon which welcomed his successor he prepared for his departure. Except for his pathetic letters and journals he made no further mark upon his times or ours. His Milton estate remains, but his house is gone, and the very street that he lived on bears

the name of Adams, his most persistent enemy.

Hutchinson's successor was Thomas Gage, the first governor sent to Boston with an army at his back. He was well known in the colonies, for he had fought well at Braddock's defeat, had married an American wife, and was courteous and affable. It remained to be seen whether one of his hesitating temperament could meet the situation. With four regiments he had undertaken to pacify Massachusetts. He had his four regiments and more, yet he must occasionally have wondered why he found no more signs of weakness in the ranks of his opponents.

At this time there were in Boston four chief classes of Whigs. The first were the ministers, and these for many years had been American to the core. As the first settlers of Massachusetts, whether Puritan or Pilgrim, had fled away from prelacy, so their spiritual descendants still hated the name of bishop. In fact, episcopacy in New England was still weak, and its greater part was concentrated



in Boston itself. Some few of its ministers preached submission; but they either had to content themselves with Tory congregations, or lost their pulpits, or had them boarded up against them. The wiser part was taken by most in avoiding politics. The sole Congregational minister who supported the king was Mather Byles, famed for his witticisms, and he likewise declined to bring into the pulpit any mention of the affairs of the day. "In the first place," he told those who demanded an expression of his opinion, "I do not understand politics; in the second place you all do, every man and mother's son of you; in the third place you have politics all the week, so pray let one day in the seven be devoted to religion; in the fourth place I am engaged in work of infinitely greater importance. Give me any subject to preach on of more consequence than the truth I bring to you, and I will preach on it next Sabbath."<sup>1</sup>

Gage's support from the pulpit was therefore weak, while at the same time the oppo-

<sup>1</sup> Sabine's "Loyalists," 190.

sition from the same source was strong. Those country ministers who were of the political creed of Sam Adams confessed it each Sabbath, and desisted not on week days from strengthening the wills of their congregations. More than that, like their predecessors in older times, many held chaplaincies in the militia, and on training days turned out, not only to approve by their presence the object of the drill, but also to stir the spirit of the homespun soldiery by prayers to the God of Moses, and of Joshua, and of David. Those in Boston, under the very nose of the general and in the presence of his soldiery, abated nothing of their zeal, but preached resistance as before. Gage, as he looked among them for signs of wavering, could have found very little comfort.

The lawyers next, like the clergymen, had supplied the Whigs much of their strength. Surely, up to the present the patriot party had been distinguished by pliancy and persistence. These characteristics had come from the lawyers, whose rejoinders and remon-

stances, petitions, resolves, and appeals were familiar professional devices. Yet Gage might have found hope in these men. For the purpose of all their delays had been compromise, and their hope was the avoidance of bloodshed. The lawyers had showed, too, a love of fair play; for while they pressed the Tories hard, they had also taken the lead in protesting against mob violence. Again, leading Whig lawyers had defended — and acquitted — the perpetrators of the Massacre. Possibly such men might be made to see reason.

A more numerous class than the lawyers was made up of the merchants, small and large. Some few of these men had made their own way in the world, yet most of them may almost have been said to have held hereditary positions in the provincial aristocracy. By far the larger number of them were Whigs, some of considerable estate, others — like that John Andrews from whose letters I have already quoted and shall quote more — were men of moderate means, shrewdly working for a “competency.” Gage,

looking forward to the enforcement of the Port Bill, could see that these men would be hard hit. While they had so far been firm in the colonial cause, the coming temptation to desert their party would be very strong. Income, security, and the favor of the king awaited them.

At the end of this series was the largest class of all, the mechanics. Until now these men had been eager in their demonstrations against technical oppression — which yet was technical after all. No Boston Whig had ever known a tithe of the wrongs of the French peasant or the Russian serf. No laboring class on earth enjoyed or ever had enjoyed greater freedom or less hampered prosperity. But with the enforcement of the Port Bill all this would change. Gage hoped, and the Tories declared, that the mechanics, so soon as pressure was applied, would “fall away from the faction.”

The first results of the new régime were not promising. To begin with, on the news of the passage of the Port Bill the Committee



of Correspondence of Boston called a meeting of the committees of the neighboring towns. This meeting scouted the idea of paying for the tea, and in a circular letter to the other colonies proposed a general cessation of trade with Great Britain. Similarly the town meeting of Boston discussed the situation, pronounced against the Port Bill, and appealed to all the sister colonies, entreating not to be left to suffer alone. In more homely language the merchants appealed to their friends. "Yes, Bill," wrote John Andrews to his brother-in-law in Philadelphia, "nothing will save us but an entire stoppage of trade, both to England and the West Indies. . . . The least hesitancy on your part *to the Southerd*, and the matter is over."

There was little hesitancy. The suggestion made by the Boston Whigs was taken up, and the maritime towns, which had been expected to take advantage of Boston's predicament, began to discontinue trade, not merely with Great Britain, but also with the West Indies. Then Salem, which was to be the capital in

place of Boston, formally repudiated the idea of profiting by the situation. The news spread to the other colonies, and they began to act. New York proposed, and the sister provinces agreed in, a call for "a general Congress." In less than a month after the coming of the news of the Port Bill, Boston was assured that the continent would not leave her to suffer alone.

But then, on the first of June, 1774, the Port Bill went into effect. So literally was it interpreted, that all carriage by boat in the harbor was forbidden. No owner of a pasture on the harbor islands might bring his hay to the town; no goods might be brought across any ferry; not even carriage by water from wharf to wharf in the town was allowed. Further, while food and fuel, according to the provisions of the act, might be brought to Boston by water, all vessels carrying them were forced to go through troublesome formalities. They must report at the customs in Salem, unload, load again, and receive a clearance for Boston. Returning, they might

carry enough provision to last them only to Salem. Besides all this, the Commissioners of Customs at Salem undertook to decide when Boston had enough provisions. The blockade, as enforced by them and the ships of war in Boston Harbor, was minutely complete and vexatious.

Yet at their mildest its provisions were complete enough. Trade by sea with the town was stopped. Consequently, so maritime were the town's activities, prosperity was instantly checked. All the workers immediately dependent on the sea for a living, sailors, wharfingers, longshoremen, and fishermen, were at once thrown out of employment. Then by a severe interpretation of the act all ship-building was stopped, since the authorities declared that, on launching, any boat would be confiscated. The shipyards shut down, the boats ready to launch were filled with water "for their preservation,"<sup>1</sup> and ship-carpenters, calkers, rope-makers, and sailmakers were thrown out of work.

<sup>1</sup> Andrews Letters.

Much misery to the unemployed would have been the result but for the forethought of the patriot leaders.

These men, early realizing the threatened hardship, called for help from the rest of the country. The response was prompt. "A special chronicle," says Bancroft, "could hardly enumerate all the generous deeds." While Lord North, fresh from an interview with Hutchinson, cheered the king with the belief that the province would soon submit, South Carolina was sending a cargo of provisions in a vessel offered for the purpose by the owner, and sailed without wages by the captain and her crew. Sheep were driven into Boston from all New England; provisions of every kind were brought in; wheat was sent by the French in Quebec; money was subscribed and sent from the more distant points. All supplies thus received were put in the hands of a donation committee, who distributed the gifts to the needy.

Yet in spite of such relief as this, and though for a short time employment was



given to workmen by permitting them to finish, launch, rig, and send away the ships then on the stocks, the situation was hard at best. It was felt not only by the lower classes, but by the merchants, whose profits ceased, and by all who depended for their income on the current trade and activity of the town. Gossipy John Andrews gives us the situation as it affected him. "If you'll believe me (though I have got near two thousand sterling out in debts and about as much more in stock), I have not received above eighty or ninety pounds Lawful money from both resources for above two months past; though previous to the port's being shut, I thought it an ordinary day's work if I did not carry home from twenty to forty dollars every evening." So little ready money circulated in the town "that really, Bill, I think myself well off to satisfy the necessary demands of my family, and you may as well ask a man for the teeth out of his head as to request the payment of money that he owes you (either in town or country, for we are

alike affected), for you'll be as likely to get the one as the other."<sup>1</sup>

Now was, indeed, the time to discover the weak points in the cause and organization of the Americans. Even strong Whigs were at times discontented, and chiefly among the middle class, without whom the leaders could have no strong support. Much of the distress of the shopkeepers and merchants came from the "Solemn League and Covenant" which, proposed on the first news of the Port Bill, was now in actual operation. Andrews's case must have been typical of many. He had countermanded all goods on the news of the Port Bill, and acquiesced in the non-importation agreement: "but upon y<sup>e</sup> measure not being adopted by the Southern Colonies, I embraced the first opportunity and re-ordered about one-fourth part of such goods as I thought would be in most demand, and be-

<sup>1</sup> The Andrews Letters, as already noted, are in the Massachusetts Historical Society's Proceedings for the volume of 1864-1865. I shall refer to them frequently without quoting pages.

hold! in about three or four weeks after that, I heard of y<sup>e</sup> amazing progress the non-consumption agreement had made through y<sup>e</sup> country; which, in my opinion, has serv'd rather to create dissensions among ourselves than to answer any valuable purpose."

Many of the Tories held the same opinion. Could not the waverers, they asked Gage, be induced to change their political faith, and especially could not the leaders be tempted?

Among these leaders the influence of Otis was waning. He had always been eccentric and unreliable, and now his intellect was threatened. An assault upon him had nearly ruined both his health and his reason. But his place had been taken by others. Samuel Adams, John Adams, Joseph Warren, and John Hancock were the men whose names were oftenest mentioned. Sinister rumors were frequent that Gage had been directed to seize them and deport them to England. Whether or not more evidence against them was needed, no arrest was as yet attempted.

Instead, in at least three quarters there was some hope of corruption.

Warren the general left untempted; it is no small tribute to the patriot's character that there could be no doubt of his integrity. Warren was not yet thirty-five years old, was of good social position, had an excellent practice and an assured future. His temperament was frank and manly, and so enthusiastic as to be fiery. Once already, on the anniversary of the Massacre in 1772, he had addressed the town meeting in condemnation of the government measures; on many other opportunities, before and since, he had either spoken in public or expressed his opinions through the press. While no advocate of violence, he was unreservedly a Whig, and nothing could be made of him. So far as is known, no attempt was made to corrupt him.

The case of John Adams was different, at least to Tory eyes. He was ambitious: no one who knew him could doubt that he was conscious of his own ability. Further, he was poor, with a growing family to support;



he was known, with the troubled times which he clearly foresaw, to be anxious for his children's future. Surely there was a possibility that Adams might be wise, and be tempted to the safer course; and fortunately there was at hand an instrument to induce him to become a Tory. Adams was the close personal friend of Jonathan Sewall, the king's attorney-general for the province, and an admirable character. The chance of distinction, the certainty of prosperity, and the importunities of such a friend, might in the end persuade Adams.

Of John Hancock it was often argued among the Tories that he might almost be left to himself. If Adams was ambitious, Hancock was more so; known to be vain, he was believed to be jealous by nature. With these weaknesses, he was also instinctively an aristocrat. How long, asked the Tories, would he continue to consort with men of low social position? How soon would he rebel at being led by the nose by the wily Adams? Position and influence were ready for him as

soon as he chose to go over to the king. The bait was always plain, and he might be counted on eventually to take it.

Even Samuel Adams, so reasoned the advisers of Gage, might be bought. For Adams was poor. In his devotion to public affairs he had let his business go to ruin, had seen his money melt away, had even sold off parts of his own house-lot. His sentiments were no better known in Boston than his threadbare clothes. His sole income was from his salary as clerk of the house of representatives, only a hundred pounds a year. To the new governor it was the most natural thing in the world to suppose that the discontent of such a man could soon be removed. He forgot Hutchinson's words: "Such is the obstinacy and inflexible disposition of the man, that he never would be conciliated by any office or gift whatever."<sup>1</sup>

Gage sent, therefore, Colonel Fenton to Adams with offers which would tempt any man that had a price. No definite knowl-

<sup>1</sup> Wells, "Life of Adams," ii, 193.

edge of the inducements has come down to us: money, place, possibly even a patent of nobility. We know, however, that they were coupled with a threat in the form of advice to make his peace with the king. And we can imagine Adams as, rising from his seat, and standing with the habitual nervous tremor of head and hands which often led his adversaries to mistake his mettle, he delivered his fearless reply.

"Sir, I trust I have long since made my peace with the King of kings. No personal consideration shall induce me to abandon the righteous cause of my country. Tell Governor Gage that it is the advice of Samuel Adams to him no longer to insult the feelings of an exasperated people!"<sup>1</sup>

And this was in the face of a situation the like of which had never been known in America. "Notwithstanding which," wrote John Andrews, "there seems to be ease, contentment, and perfect composure in the countenance of almost every person you

<sup>1</sup> Wells, "Adams," ii, 193.

meet in the streets, which conduct very much perplexes the Governor and others, our lords and masters, that they are greatly puzzled, and know not what to do or how to act, as they expected very different behaviour from us."

There is but one explanation of such a state of mind in the Whigs, in the face of the evidently approaching trial. Their consciences were clear. This revolution, when finally it came about, was quite within the spirit of the British Constitution. The Whigs believed they were right, and had no fear of the consequences. No testimony to their virtues, as the backbone of a new nation, will speak louder than their present attitude. External testimony is not hard to quote. "The people of Boston and Massachusetts Bay," wrote Thomas Hollis but a few weeks before this time, "are, I suppose, take them as a body, the soberest, most knowing, virtuous people at this time upon earth." Other English opinion to the same effect, and French admiration by the chapter, might be quoted.



Yet a truer proof of the quality of the people is to be found in the calm self-confidence which "very much perplexed" the governor.

One more comment may safely be ventured here. Before two years were over it was known that Gage, and perhaps even Hutchinson during his administration, had had the most complete information of the secret doings of the Whig leaders. In fact, even the deliberations of the workmen's caucuses must have been known to Gage. That no arrests were made can mean but one thing: that the Whigs were honest in their endeavor to work their ends by legal means. Samuel Adams may have foreseen the eventual outcome, and knowing it to be inevitable may have striven to make it speedy and complete. But there was no general scheme for independence, no plot for a revolt. "The Father of the Revolution" laid his plans in silence, and waited for the ripening of the times.

Gage and his advisers, "greatly puzzled," also watched the crystallizing of opinion. Of the temper of the Bostonians, although

oppressed by the Port Bill, there could presently be no doubt. Emboldened by the presence of troops in the town, the Tories called town meetings, first to resolve to pay for the tea, and then to dismiss the Committee of Correspondence. These two actions, if taken, would have totally changed the situation. The meetings were crowded, every courtesy was shown the Tories, and in the second meeting, since Adams was absent, the Whigs had to be content with the leadership of Warren. But there was no hesitation in either case. The first meeting rejected the proposal to pay for the tea. In the second the discretion of Warren proved equal to his zeal, his management of the meeting was perfect, and the vote upheld the Committee of Correspondence by a large majority.

The next action explains the absence of Adams from Boston at such an important time. According to the new laws, the Assembly met at Salem, under the eye of the governor and in the presence of his troops. Gage knew very well that a call

had been sent throughout the colonies for an election of delegates to a general Congress which should deliberate on the present situation. He had no intention that delegates should be elected from Massachusetts. He had partisans in the Assembly, and an informant on the committee to introduce legislation. Every move was reported to him. Never did Sam Adams dissemble more cleverly. So dull and spiritless did public matters seem, that Gage's informant thought it safe to go home on private business. Then Adams acted. Quietly laying his plans, on the morning of the seventeenth of June, 1774, he locked the door of the chamber and proposed that the Assembly elect delegates to the Continental Congress. A Tory pleaded sickness and hurried to Gage with the news; but the door was again locked, and the business proceeded. Though the governor sent his secretary with a message dissolving the Assembly, the secretary knocked in vain. The doors were not opened until delegates had been elected to the Congress,

a tax laid to pay their expenses, and resolutions passed exhorting the province to stand firm.

One of the delegates-elect was John Adams. For years he had declined to hold public office, and had even avoided town meetings. There was now a natural Tory hope that he might refuse this office; there was even a last chance to wean him from the Whig cause, for he was presently to ride on circuit, and there would meet his friend Sewall. When the two met, the Tory reasoned earnestly, pointing out the irresistible power of Great Britain. But Adams was ready with his answer. "Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish with my country is my unalterable determination."<sup>1</sup> And so went another hope of the Tories.

The summer of 1774 wore along, with no improvement in the situation. Rather it became worse. So much time had elapsed without definite news of the passing of the Regulating

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft, edition of 1876, iv, 344. Subsequent references to Bancroft will be to this edition.



Act, that there was hope that the measure had failed. But early in August came news of its passage, and with it a list of appointments for the new Council. The appointees were all chosen from among the Tories, or from those inclined to the king's side. "It is apprehended," wrote Andrews, "that most of 'em will accept."

Now at last it was natural to suppose that the Whigs had come to the end of their resources. Their Assembly was dissolved, a Tory held each appointive position, Boston was filled with soldiers, and the harbor was guarded by ships of war. Active opposition to the troops would have been madness, and it seemed impossible to conduct even the ordinary business of the town, for now town meetings might legally be called only for the purpose of electing officers. Yet when Gage called the selectmen before him, and graciously indicated his willingness to allow meetings for certain harmless purposes, the reply surprised him. There was no need, said the selectmen, to ask his permission for

a meeting: they had one in existence already. In fact they had two, the May meeting and the June meeting, each legally called before the enforcement of the Regulating Act, and each legally "adjourned" until such time as it was needed. The technical subterfuge was too much for Gage, and the adjournments continued in spite of the law.

As the Massachusetts delegates prepared for their journey to Philadelphia, where the Congress was to be held, there occurred, if we can believe the story told by John Andrews — it was certainly believed in Boston at the time — a demonstration of affection for Samuel Adams. "For not long since some persons (their names unknown) sent and ask'd his permission to build him a new barn, the old one being decay'd, which was executed in a few days. A second sent to ask leave to repair his house, which was thoroughly effected soon. A third sent to beg the favor of him to call at a taylor's shop and be measur'd for a suit of cloaths and chuse his cloth, which were finish'd and sent home for his

acceptance. A fourth presented him with a new whig,<sup>1</sup> a fifth with a new Hatt, a sixth with a pair of the best silk hose, a seventh with six pair of fine thread ditto, a eighth with six pair shoes, and a ninth modestly inquired of him whether his finances want rather low than otherways. He reply'd it was true that was the case, but he was very indifferent about these matters, so that his *poor* abilities was of any service to the Publick; upon which the Gentleman obliged him to accept of a purse containing about 15 or 20 Johannes." It is possible that these attentions to Adams grew out of the desire that he, so well known in Boston that his shabbiness meant nothing, should appear well at the Congress, where his dress might prejudice others against him. True or not, this little story has its significance, for, says Andrews to his correspondent, "I mention this to show you how much he is esteem'd here. They value him for his *good* sense, *great* abilities, *amazing* fortitude, *noble* resolution,

<sup>1</sup> *Sic!*

and *undaunted* courage: being firm and unmov'd at all the various reports that were propagated in regard to his being taken up and sent home,<sup>1</sup> notwithstanding he had repeated letters from his *friends*, both in England as well as here, to keep out of the way."

If the governor desired to arrest Adams, he had plenty of opportunity. There was even a public occasion to take all the delegates together, when they left the town on their way to Philadelphia. "A very respectable parade," wrote Andrews, "in sight of five of the Regiments encamp'd on the Common, being in a coach and four, preceded by two white servants well mounted and arm'd, with four blacks behind in livery, two on horseback and two footmen." Perhaps Gage breathed a sigh of relief with the "brace of Adamses" away, but his real troubles were only beginning.

Massachusetts would have nothing to do with the newly appointed officers. The thirty-

<sup>1</sup> Note the use of the word, as meaning England.



six councillors, appointed under writ of mandamus, excited the most indignation. Of the Boston nominees thirteen accepted, two declined, and four took time to consider; throughout the province the proportion was about the same. But those who wavered and those who accepted presently heard from their neighbors. Leonard of Taunton, hearing of a surprise party mustering from the neighboring towns, departed hastily for Boston. His father, by promises that he would urge his son to resign, with difficulty prevailed on the disgusted neighbors to leave the councillor's property unharmed. In Worcester, Timothy Paine was taken to the common, and, in the presence of two thousand standing in military order, he read his declination of his appointment. Ruggles of Hardwick was warned not to return home; his neighbors swore that he should never pass the great bridge of the town alive. Murray of Rutland, like Leonard of Taunton, escaped the attentions of his townspeople, who scorned the threat of confiscation and death, and

demanded his resignation. "This," wrote his brother to him, "is not the language of the common people only: those that have heretofore sustained the fairest character are the warmest in this matter; and, among the many friends you have heretofore had, I can scarcely mention any to you now."

The people did not always act with violence, but the compulsion which they put upon their fellow-townsmen was strong. Watson of Plymouth, long respected in the town, had been appointed by the king to the Council, and had intended to accept. But when he appeared in church on the following Sunday, his friends rose and left the meeting-house. In the face of their scorn he bowed his head over his cane, and resolved to resign.<sup>1</sup>

More than twenty of the thirty-six councillors either declined their appointment, or resigned. The rest could find no safety except in Boston, under the protection of the troops. Even the courts were prevented from

<sup>1</sup> I take these facts from Bancroft and the Andrews Letters.

sitting, in one case by the ingenious method of packing the court-room so solidly with spectators that judge and sheriff could not enter. Only among the garrison at Boston was there comfort for the Tory officials.

Boston itself was troublesome enough. When Gage, regarding himself as "personally affronted" by John Hancock,<sup>1</sup> removed him from command of the Cadets, the company sent a deputation to Salem and returned him their standard, declining longer to keep up their customary service as the governor's body-guard. The governor, vexed, replied that had he previously known of their intentions, he would have dismissed them himself.

The town meetings troubled him also. Salem held one under his nose, in spite of a feint to interrupt them by the soldiers. When he summoned the committee of correspondence of the town to answer for the meeting, they were stubborn and defiant, refused to

<sup>1</sup> Hancock seems to have practised upon Gage the subterfuge which he afterwards used with Washington, pretending to be too ill to wait upon him.

give bail when arrested, and were consequently — released ! Other towns held meetings to elect delegates to a county convention, and the governor was powerless to stop them. Although he had many more troops than the four regiments with which he first declared that he could do so much, he felt his helplessness, and, cursing the town meetings, waited for more soldiers. He summoned the remnant of his council to meet in Salem ; but the members were afraid to come, and, departing from his orders, he allowed them to sit in Boston.

And now, as the weeks passed on, even Boston was rumbling with the thunder of the coming storm. Israel Putnam, having driven to Boston a flock of sheep, the gift to the poor of Boston from his Connecticut town, became the lion of the day. Meeting on the Common some of his old friends in the regular army, they chaffed him on the military situation. Twenty ships and twenty regiments, they told him, were to be expected if the country did not submit. "If they



come," returned the stanch old Indian fighter, "I am ready to treat them as enemies."

At length the forms of law failed even in Boston. When the judges summoned a jury, it not only refused to take oath, but presented a written protest against the authority on which the court acted. The judges gave up the attempt in despair, and the governor and his advisers thought that matters were come to a pretty pass when a mere petit juror could declare "that his conscience would not let him take oath whiles Peter Oliver set upon the bench."<sup>1</sup> There was apparently no punishment to meet such obduracy.

But at last news came to Gage on which he felt compelled to act. Much powder had been stored in the magazine at Quarry Hill in Charlestown. He was informed that during August the towns had removed their stock, until there remained only that which belonged to the province. This stock Gage determined to secure against possible illegal

<sup>1</sup> Andrews Letters.

seizure, by seizing it himself. On the morning of the first of September, by early daylight, detachments of troops in boats took the powder to the Castle, and also secured two cannon from Cambridge. Rumors of violence and bloodshed spread rapidly, and by nightfall half of New England was in motion, marching toward Boston.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE POWDER ALARM AND THE WINTER OF 1774-1775

GAGE had by this time given up hope of winning to his side the leaders of the Whigs. If he still retained a doubt of the temper of the people, the events of the first and second of September would have made him certain. Marching in companies, they converged upon Cambridge, whence the Lieutenant-Governor, Andrew Oliver, hastily departed to Boston, to implore Gage to send out no troops, lest not a man of them should return alive. On his way in, Oliver passed Warren hastening out. But his influence was not needed. The militia companies had already laid aside their weapons and were parading peacefully upon Cambridge common. There they were addressed by two of the Mandamus Council, who confirmed

their resignations and promised in no way to be concerned in the acts of Gage's government. Then the high-sheriff came under the attention of the meeting, and likewise promised to do nothing under the new laws.

Hallowell, the Commissioner of Customs, escaped more serious handling. Passing by the common and its assemblage of Whigs, he "spoke somewhat contemptuously of them." They promptly sent some mounted men after his chaise. On seeing them coming he stopped his chaise, unhitched his horse and mounted, and ran his pursuers a close race to Boston Neck, where he found safety with the guard.

Oliver, returning to Cambridge with the governor's promise to send out no troops, was waited upon by the great assemblage. The Whigs demanded his resignation as a councillor. This, after demurring, Oliver gave, and offered to resign also from the lieutenant-governorship. But this the company allowed him to keep. Andrews records, "It is worthy remark that Judge Lee remarked to 'em, after he had made his resig-



nation, that he never saw so large a number of people together and preserve so peaceable order before in his life."

This orderly meeting, proceeding with parliamentary forms, passed a resolve that Gage was within his legal rights in removing the powder from the store-house. They then "voted unanimously their abhorrence of mobs and riots,"<sup>1</sup> and with these lessons given for any one to learn, they peaceably turned toward their homes. On their way they turned back those who, from further away, were eagerly coming to avenge the rumored death of their countrymen and the bombardment of the town. Putnam, after disbanding his Connecticut company, wrote to urge the men of Massachusetts to take better care of the remainder of their powder.

The "Powder Alarm" stirred the country everywhere. At Philadelphia its exaggerated reports greatly disturbed the Congress, but the response was significant. "When the horrid news was brought here of the bombard-

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft.

ment of Boston," wrote John Adams, "which made us completely miserable for two days, we saw proofs both of the sympathy and the resolution of the continent. War! war! war! was the cry, and it was pronounced in a tone which would have done honor to the oratory of a Briton or a Roman. If it had proved true, you would have heard the thunder of an American Congress."<sup>1</sup>

Gage now, for the first time, seems to have had a glimmer of an idea of the formidable forces that were against him. He began to consider the military situation, and the defence of the town against another such rising. If on the next occasion the provincials should attempt to pursue a commissioner not merely to the Neck, but past it, there must be means of stopping them. Gage gave orders to fortify the Neck, which was in those days the single land approach to Boston.

The modern city in no way resembles the old town. Now, between South Boston and Cambridge, a score of highways lead into the

<sup>1</sup> Adams Letters, 39.







city. Bridges and even tunnels give direct communication from South Boston, Cambridge, Charlestown, Chelsea, and East Boston. But in 1774 South Boston was a mud-flat; the Back Bay — at least at high water — was what its name implies; Chelsea was Winnisimit, with but half a dozen houses; and East Boston was an island, having but two houses on it. Now the flats have been filled up, the mainland brought closer, and the approaches bridged. In Governor Gage's day Boston was still a peninsula, roughly pear-shaped, and connected with the mainland by a strip of land which was, at high tide, scarcely a hundred yards wide.

Batteries commanding the road which crossed this isthmus seemed, at the time, quite sufficient to defend the town. It was not till later that Gage began to consider the heights of Dorchester and Charlestown, which, to the south and north, threatened Boston. Now he set to work upon an earthwork at the Neck, brought cannon there, and began to build block-houses. It was reported that he

was to cut a ditch across the Neck, and confine traffic to a narrow bridge; but at the objection of the selectmen such an idea, if he had considered it, was given up. Protest against the new earthworks was also lodged. The selectmen of the town, and a committee from the convention for Suffolk County which then happened to sit, came to Gage with remonstrances. Warren, from the convention, twice urged his demands. "Good God, gentlemen," responded the harried governor, "make yourselves easy, and I will be so." <sup>1</sup>

There was no more ease of mind for Governor Gage. Within the limits of Boston and Charlestown were several cannon belonging to the militia organizations of the town. When the general tried to secure the Charlestown guns from secretion by the provincials, they disappeared. "Ever since," wrote Andrews a fortnight later, "the General has ordered a double guard to y<sup>e</sup> new and old gun houses, where y<sup>e</sup> brass field pieces be-

<sup>1</sup> Andrews Letters.

longing to our militia are lodged: notwithstanding which . . . We'n'sday evening, or rather night, our people took these from the Old house (by opening the side of the house) and carried away through Frank Johonnot's Garden. Upon which he gave it in orders the next day to the officer on guard to remove those from the New house (which stands directly opposite the encampment of the 4th Regiment and in the middle of the street near the large Elm tree), sometime the next night into the camp; and to place a guard at each end, or rather at both doors, till then. At the fixed hour the Officer went with a number of Mattrosses to execute his orders, but behold, the guns were gone!" Lest the guns in the North Battery should similarly be spirited away, the bewildered general ordered them to be spiked.

His state of mind was not improved when he received, as he did early in September, the resolutions passed by the Suffolk convention. The Suffolk Resolves, as they are called, covered the whole of the existing situa-

tion. Repudiating the king's claim to unconditional obedience, they declared the Regulating Act unconstitutional, and called on all officers under it to resign their places. They advised that all taxes should be withheld from the king's treasury, and suggested a provincial congress to deal with the affairs of Massachusetts. The resolves further declared that the Americans had no intention of aggression, advised peaceful measures, but threatened to seize all crown officers if any political arrest were made. Looking forward to the eventual rupture, the resolves advised the towns to choose their military officers with great care, and finally made provision to spread alarm or summon assistance at a moment's notice.

Affairs had now reached a new phase. The barrier which Gage had erected at the Neck had effectually cut him off from the province which he had been sent to govern. From that time on he had no authority beyond the range of his batteries.

Boston was his, to be sure. In spite of



alarms (for once the field day of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company, the pride of the province, aroused the fleet; and once the little navy was awake all night against an attack that never came), in spite of such alarms, no attempt was made upon his army or his ships. The town was quiet, and Tory ladies and gentlemen were at last at ease. On the Mall they might daily watch the parade of the troops, speak their minds about the faction, and agree upon the cowardice of the provincials. Yet the Whigs of Boston made no submission. They were, as Warren wrote of them, "silent and inflexible." At the same time they had everything at stake. Their leaders Hancock and Warren still lived openly among them, in the face of the threat of arrest. The artisans, too, at this period put behind them a great temptation. For many months they had been idle; now within a few weeks the governor had commenced building barracks for the troops, upon which Boston workmen were engaged. For the first time since the Port Bill went into

effect they were earning a comfortable living. But now they refused to work longer for the king. In vain Gage appealed to the selectmen and to Hancock. One and all the artisans withdrew, to subsist, as before, upon the donations that still continued to come in from the other towns and colonies.

Outside the barrier at the Neck was an unparalleled state of affairs. In Massachusetts there was no legal government. The charter had been abrogated, but the new system had been rejected by the people. There were no judges and no courts, no sheriffs; there was no treasury, and no machinery of government whatever. Consequently there was a striking opportunity for lawlessness. Yet the quiet in the province was remarkable. In the absence of executive and judicial officers, the selectmen of the towns and the Committees of Correspondence took upon themselves the work that was to be done, and did it quietly and well. There was no thievery, no murder, no repudiation of debts. So far as their ordinary

life was concerned, the people simply lived on in their ancient way.

There was, nevertheless, plenty of lawlessness of the new kind. Just as soon as the people could catch the newly appointed officials, they forced them to resign; and whenever the courts attempted to sit they were made to adjourn. There continued the little migration of Tories toward Boston, always in the expectation that the sojourn was to be brief, and that presently Gage would have the situation in hand. Most of the refugees, however, never saw their homes again. As for Gage, he was suspected of detaining the remaining councillors in Boston, lest he should not have any left to him. Indeed, his position in Salem had already become so undignified and uncomfortable that early in September, with the Commissioners of Customs and all other officials, he returned to Boston. There he also withdrew the two regiments with which he had ineffectually endeavored to sustain his prestige in Salem. Yet he had not been

long in Boston before he was forced to watch the preparations for a new act of defiance.

Already, unfortunately for him, he had convened the Assembly to meet at Salem. Now that he was in Boston he desired the legislators to meet there also; yet he could not adjourn them until they met. This he planned to do. The delegates, however, knew that if they came to Boston they must take their oaths of office before the Mandamus Council. To this the representatives would never submit, and accordingly planned another move. Boston carried out its part under the eye of the governor. The town elected its representatives, chief among whom were Hancock, Warren, and the absent Samuel Adams. The meeting then deliberately, reminding the delegates that they could not conscientiously discharge their duty under the conditions which the governor would impose, "empowered and instructed" them to join with the delegates from other towns in a general provincial congress, to act upon public matters in such a manner as



should appear "most conducive to the true interest of this town and province, and most likely to preserve the liberties of all America."

Thus the town of Boston, inflexible but no longer silent, calmly ignored the governor and his troops. A strong governor would have imprisoned the delegates and dissolved the meeting; Gage allowed it to proceed for the rest of the day with illegal business, and did nothing.

It was at this time that the conduct of affairs fell into the hands of Warren. Adams was away at Philadelphia, and Hancock, though older than Warren and an excellent figurehead, had neither Warren's wisdom nor his fiery energy. It was Warren who corresponded with the Congress at Philadelphia and with the Committees of Correspondence of the Massachusetts towns, and it was to him that the province naturally turned. When we remember him as the hero of Bunker Hill, it is well also to recall him as the tried servant and the excellent adviser of the public.

One act of his at this point is worth remembering. As we have seen, Episcopalians were not in good odor with the Massachusetts Whigs; the colony had been founded as an asylum from "prelacy," and still, after nearly two hundred and fifty years, the few members of the English church were chiefly supporters of the crown. Warren now took occasion to remind his brethren that to the south conditions were different, and that "the gentlemen of the Established Church of England are men of the most just and liberal sentiments." In a printed letter he requested fair treatment of all Episcopalians, and ended by quoting from a letter of Samuel Adams an account of the Episcopal chaplain of the Philadelphia Congress, whose first prayer moved many of the members to tears. Although this chaplain later turned his coat, the reminder was timely and valuable, for many southern Whigs, among them Washington himself, were members of the Established Church.

As to the proposed provincial congress,

Gage now hastened to forestall the consequences of his own action. He declared the convening of the Assembly inexpedient, and removed the obligation to attend. Nevertheless ninety of the delegates came together, waited a day for the governor, then formed themselves into a provincial congress, and adjourned. On the 11th of October they met again at Concord, this time with nearly two hundred more members, and in the old meeting-house began their sessions with Hancock as their president, but with Warren as the most influential member of their body.

His influence was thrown on the side of moderation. There were plenty in the province ready to urge violence. They argued that the old charter should be resumed; and as if the present acts were not sufficiently revolutionary, were ready to proceed to violent measures. But the time had not yet come. Massachusetts sentiment, responding to persecution, was far in advance of the feelings of the rest of the country. No action could safely be taken until the other

colonies were ready to support New England. In constant touch with Samuel Adams — for Paul Revere and other trusted couriers were always on the road with letters — Warren was able to remind his colleagues of the need of patience, and to cool their ardor by his warnings that in open rebellion they would stand alone. His services, and those of the steadfast band who supported him, were invaluable. In these days he rose to the full stature of political leadership, in guiding the actions of the provincial congress and in constraining it to patience.

And yet its acts were revolutionary enough. It must be remembered that until this time the Whigs of Massachusetts had remained within their constitutional rights. Apart from the Tea-Party, no word or act of town meeting or of legislature, or even of any prominent citizen, needed for justification anything more than the ancient charter rights of the province. But now the provincial congress went beyond anything that had ever been done before. It appointed a



Committee of Safety, which should prepare for equipping and raising an army. It appointed a Committee of Supplies, which presently gathered together a few hundred spades and pickaxes, some muskets, a thousand wooden mess-bowls, four thousand flints, and a small supply of peas and flour—a pitiful attempt to compete with the vast resources of Great Britain. More than this, it appointed a Receiver-General, to keep the public money of the province. It might be argued that all these acts were still within the charter rights, yet the Whig position was no longer so strong as on the occasions when it had caused the crown lawyers to doubt. With a treasurer engaged in receiving the taxes which the towns willingly paid him, and with generals appointed to command an army, it began to look as if Massachusetts were in rebellion.

Gage was perplexed. His province was out of his control, and now came the news that the Continental Congress, before adjourning, had voted approval of the course of

Massachusetts. In fact, Congress had voted its support. "Resolved, that this congress approve of the opposition made by the inhabitants of the Massachusetts Bay to the execution of the late acts of Parliament; and, if the same shall be attempted to be carried into execution by force, in such case all America ought to support them in their opposition." With such words in his mind, Gage had to listen to the ringing of the church bells in welcome to Samuel Adams as he returned from Philadelphia. Adams and Cushing, two of the Boston delegates, now took their seats in the provincial congress, and the remaining two delegates were invited to attend. The public acts of the congress continued bold and uncompromising, and every little while there came to the harried governor some public letter of remonstrance, or some delegation from an aggrieved town or county convention, to object, to expostulate, or to demand. Never were people better trained to politics than the Americans at this moment. Gage was

quite unfitted to cope with them. Hutchinson would have been more vigorous, and even Bernard more clever. The king fitly characterized his governor as "the mild general."

Gage, in his perplexity, now made trouble by suggesting the recruiting of Indians against the day of rebellion, and called for more troops from England. The disgusted king sought to replace him as commander-in-chief by the one English soldier whom the Americans held in respect, in fact, as the hero of the French war, almost in reverence. But Sir Jeffrey Amherst bluntly told the king that he would not serve against the Americans, "to whom he had been so much obliged." The king was forced to content himself by sending to Gage's support three major-generals, as if in the hope that their divided counsels would bring about a uniform policy.

Of these three men America was to hear a good deal in the next seven years. The least important of them was Sir Henry Clinton, of respectable military skill. More striking in character was Sir John Burgoyne, poet,

dramatist, parliamentarian, upon whom America will ever look with the indulgence which the victor feels for one who is signally and completely defeated. "General Big-talk," the Yankee balladist called him when once the siege was in progress. It is true that Burgoyne had an easy flow of words, and we shall before long find him doing his share to make Gage ridiculous. But Burgoyne had his manly parts, and though he lacked greatness, he commands at times our sympathy and our respect. He made a romantic marriage, which proved a happy one; and his real claim to literary distinction lies in the letter in which, on his departure for America, he commended his wife to the care of the king. Burgoyne, in a still brutal age, was a humanitarian, and was one of the first, not only to oppose flogging in the army, but also to advocate friendly personal relations between officers and men. America seldom took Burgoyne seriously, but he is to us of to-day a pleasing and picturesque character.



The third of the new generals was Sir William Howe, whose chief misfortune was that fate had set him to oppose Washington. He came of a family well known in American annals, for one brother was now an admiral popular in the colonies, and another was still mourned in America for his brilliant talents and magnetic personality. William Howe had gained his seat in Parliament by appeals to the memory of that brother, and by promises to take no active military command against America. But on being offered the post under Gage, Howe asked if this were a request or an order. The adroit king returned the proper answer, and Howe, protesting that no other course was open to him, prepared to sail for Boston.

Meanwhile Gage, alone, made various futile moves, at which the province looked with patience. From time to time his troops marched a few miles into the country, and returned again. In January he sent a detachment to Marshfield, to occupy the village so that the loyal residents might drink their

tea in peace. It was a comfort to him to think that there was one town in the province in which a militia company was drilling for his support, and with the king's muskets. A month later Gage sent troops to Salem, in order to seize some cannon; but the commander, finding the country in arms to receive him, wisely withdrew his little force after — to use a term yet to be invented — “saving his face” by crossing a bridge under promise of immediate return.

The Reverend Jonas Clark, speaking of this event, adds an indignant note to an equally indignant sermon.<sup>1</sup> “This unsuccessful expedition was made on LORD’S day, Feb. 26, 1775. The party consisted of 200 or 300 men; it was commanded by Lieut. Col. Leslie. The vessels which brought them to *Marblehead*, arrived in the harbour, on the morning of the sabbath; and the better to conceal their intentions, lay quietly, at anchor, near to the wharves, with but very few hands upon deck (the troops being kept close) ’till

<sup>1</sup> A Sermon preached at Lexington, April 19, 1776, 26.

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the people of the town were assembled for the services of religion. — While the inhabitants were thus engaged in their devotions to God, the party landed and made a speedy march to Salem. But all their precaution did not avail them for the accomplishment of their enterprize. The *eagle-eyes* of a watchful and wary people, justly jealous of every measure of their oppressors, are not easily evaded. Their motions were observed, and such timely notice given, that such numbers were collected and such measures taken, before they arrived, as effectually frustrated their design and obliged them to return defeated and chagrined.”

So, throughout the winter, the garrison and its governor accomplished nothing — or less than nothing, if one considers that Gage proved to the provincials the weakness of his character, while at the same time he angered them by issuing, when the provincial congress appointed a day of prayer, a proclamation against hypocrisy.

As the winter passed there was at times hope that the political situation might be

relieved by action of Parliament. Yet though the worst House of Commons in history had been dissolved, the one which took its place was, at its beginning, little better. It learned wisdom only from the events of the war. To this Parliament Chatham and Burke now appealed in vain; even Fox, at last definitely taking his stand with the supporters of America, could not move it from its subservience to the king. When finally a bill was introduced to deprive America of its fisheries, it began to seem that legislative oppression could go no further.

And now to other Americans than Samuel Adams it became evident that there was no hope of concession from England. The second provincial congress began its sittings. Warren was still on the Committee of Safety. Preble, Ward, and Pomeroy were reappointed generals, and to them were added Thomas and Heath. Supplies were voted for an army of fifteen thousand. There was still hope of conciliation, but, wrote Warren, "every day, every hour, widens the breach."



The town of Boston knew how wide the breach was, and how different the points of view. The letters and diaries of the time show the constant little irritations which exasperated both sides. In those days, if the British soldier was not so sober as now, the British officer was far more given to drink. From "the Erskine incident" until almost the outbreak of hostilities, drunken officers made trouble with the inhabitants, and found them less submissive than the average British citizen. Yankee burghers had an uncomfortable trick of arming themselves with cudgels and returning to the attack; the watch occasionally locked up Lieutenant This and Ensign That; and more dignified citizens, disdaining personal conflict, brought their complaints to the general, thus adding to his troubles. John Andrews tells the story of the school boys who, in the phrase of the day, "improv'd" the coast on School Street. "General Haldiman, improving the house that belongs to Old Cook, his servant took it upon him to cut up their coast and fling

ashes upon it. The lads made a muster, and chose a committee to wait upon the General, who admitted them, and heard their complaint, which was couch'd in very genteel terms, complaining that their fathers before 'em had improv'd it as a coast from time immemorial, &ca. He ordered his servant to repair the damage, and acquainted the Governor with the affair, who observ'd that it was impossible to beat the notion of Liberty out of the people, as it was rooted in 'em *from their Childhood.*"

Gage did his best to be fair to the inhabitants, and they acknowledged his endeavor. But the officers, less experienced than he and with fewer responsibilities, and also less acquainted with the spirit of the colonists, were angry with him for what they called his subservience. They dubbed him Tommy, and confided their indignation to their diaries. "Yesterday," wrote Lieutenant Barker of the King's Own,<sup>1</sup> "in compliance with the request

<sup>1</sup> His diary is published in the *Atlantic Monthly* for April and May, 1877, 384 and 544. I shall use it freely without further definite reference.

of the Select Men, Genl Gage order'd that no Soldier in future shou'd appear in the Streets with his side Arms. Query, Is this not encouraging the Inhabitants in their licentious and riotous disposition? Also orders are issued for the Guards to seize all military Men found engaged in any disturbance, whether Agressors or not; and to secure them, 'till the matter is enquired into. By Whom? By Villains that wou'd not censure one of their own Vagrants, even if He attempted the life of a Soldier; whereas if a Soldier errs in the least, who is more ready to accuse than Tommy? His negligence on the other hand has been too conspicuous in the affair of Cn. Maginis to require a further comment."

Doubtless there is much to be said for the soldiers, both officers and privates, since the Bostonians had not abandoned their irritating ways, even in the midst of an army. But the army was also very hard to live with. On the first of January our discontented officer records, "Nothing remarkable but the drunkenness among the Soldiers, which is now got

to a very great pitch; owing to the cheapness of the liquor, a Man may get drunk for a Copper or two." The officers, we have seen, did not set their men a very good example; but even in their sober senses they were scarcely conciliatory. They formed burlesque congresses, and marched in mock procession in the streets, absurdly dressed to represent the leaders of the Whigs. On the queen's birthday a banquet was held, and from the balcony of the tavern the toasts were announced, while in the street a squad of soldiers fired salutes. Toasts to Lord North were not relished in Boston, and reminders of Culloden were too significant for those whom the army already called rebels. It is an interesting proof of the weakness of Gage's hold upon his own army that such childishness should have been permitted, or that such threats should have been made to a town that still was within its legal rights.

Beneath these petty quarrels we perceive the fundamental differences. Over these the more learned of both sides carried on a war



of words. The newspapers teemed with letters, poems, essays, and dissertations; and Novanglus, Massachusettensis, Vindex, and other pseudo-Romans endeavored to convert each other, or else to point solemn warnings. "Remember," writes a yeoman of Suffolk County, "the fate of Wat Tyler, and think how vain it is for Jack, Sam, or Will to war against Great Britain, now she is in earnest! . . . Our leaders are desperate bankrupts! Our country is without money, stores, or necessities of war, — without one place of refuge or defence! If we were called together, we should be a confused herd, without any disposition to obedience, without a general of ability to direct and guide us; and our numbers would be our destruction! Never did a people rebel with so little reason; therefore our conduct cannot be justified before God! . . . Rouse, rouse ye, Massachusetians, while it be yet time! Ask pardon of God, submit to our king and parliament, whom we have wickedly and grievously offended." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Frothingham's "Life of Warren," 413.

This exclamatory appeal plainly shows a type of mind which often has saved the British Empire, yet which at periods in history has come near to ruining it. English conservatism has at most times been invaluable to the country; but when, as repeatedly under the Stuart kings and again under George III, it has forsaken its true task in order to support absolutism, it has brought the ship of state very near to wreck. In reminding of the fate of Wat Tyler our Suffolk yeoman forgot, if indeed he ever knew, the fate of Charles and James Stuart. The majority of Englishmen have never been willing to admit that in defending their constitutional rights they were guilty of impiety. Though such warnings and appeals were at this time frequent enough, the Whigs paid no regard to them.

When we leave the Tories and turn to the soldiery we find one other common English failing — underrating an adversary. England had so long been victorious on land and sea that it was almost a natural assumption

that she was superior to any force that could be brought against her. But that she was always right, or her opponents always cowards, were corollaries that did not necessarily follow. Yet both of these were implicitly believed, not only by supporters at home, but also by the army in America. As to Yankee cowardice, many a Tory could, and later did, warn the troops against belief in it. But now, at any rate, the belief was fully indulged. From it was an easy step to general contempt. Rascal and Scoundrel were common synonyms for Whig. Lord Percy was a brigadier-general and old enough to form his own conclusions, yet after living in the camp at Boston for a month, he gives us a complete analysis of the American character—the summary, no doubt, of British military opinion. “The People here,” he wrote home, “are the most designing, Artfull Villains in the World. They have not the least Idea of either Religion or Morality. Nor have they the least Scruple of taking the most solemn Oath on any Matter that can assist their Purpose,

tho' they know the direct contrary can be clearly & evidently proved in half an Hour." <sup>1</sup>

We see, then, the situation fully prepared: an inflexible people, a weak governor, a party of believers in divine right, and a contemptuous soldiery. The next event, which all but ended in violence, showed that there needed but a little tenser situation in order to bring about the rupture.

Now occurred the annual oration on the Massacre. Since that tragedy, five years ago, there had been an annual commemoration of it in the form of a speech by one of the Whig leaders. This year the post was one of evident responsibility and even of danger, but Warren, true to his character, solicited the appointment. He announced his subject as "The Baleful Influence of Standing Armies in Time of Peace." On the fifth of March the crowd that came to hear him filled the Old South to the doors.

The chance was one which, had Gage received the orders which were supposed to

<sup>1</sup> Bulletin of Boston Public Library, x, No. 87, 320.



have been sent him, and had he been the man he ought to have been, he never should have let slip. There in one building were, of the chiefs of the "faction," Warren, Samuel Adams, Hancock, and many lesser men. They could be taken at one blow. Some forty British officers were present, whether to effect a capture or merely to cause a disturbance was not known. At Samuel Adams' instance they were given front seats, or places on the steps of the pulpit. There they listened quietly to Warren's words.

The oration was, in the style of the day, florid; but it was full of genuine feeling. Warren spoke of the rise of the British Empire in America, the hope of its future, the policy of the king, and the Massacre. Turning then to the present situation, he spoke in words which no one could mistake, bolder, perhaps, than ever before had been publicly spoken in the presence of hostile soldiers. He reminded his countrymen of their martial achievements, he spoke of the critical situation, and, while disclaiming the desire for independence,

encouraged the colonists to claim their rights. "An independence of Great Britain is not our aim. No: our wish is, that Britain and the colonies may, like the oak and ivy, grow and increase in strength together. But, whilst the infatuated plan of making one part of the empire slaves to the other is persisted in, the interest and safety of Britain as well as the colonies require that the wise measures recommended by the honorable, the Continental Congress be steadily pursued, whereby the unnatural contest between a parent honored and a child beloved may probably be brought to such an issue that the peace and happiness of both may be established upon a lasting basis. But, if these pacific measures are ineffectual, and it appears the only way to safety lies through fields of blood, I know you will not turn your faces from our foes, but will undauntedly press forward until tyranny is trodden under foot, and you have fixed your adored goddess, Liberty, fast by a Brunswick's side, on the American throne."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Frothingham's "Life of Warren," 435-436.

These were fearless words, and full of meaning. Had there been men of sense among the officers present, they must have been impressed by the solemnity of the warning; in fact, they were silent until the end. It was not until after the oration, when the meeting was voting thanks to the orator, that the officers endeavored to interrupt the proceedings. The cry of Fie! was mistaken for that of Fire, and there was a moment's panic. We have opposing accounts of it.

"It was imagined," wrote our discontented Lieutenant of the King's Own, "that there wou'd have been a riot, which if there had wou'd in all probability have proved fatal to Hancock, Adams, Warren, and the rest of those Villains, as they were all up in the Pulpit together, and the meeting was crowded with Officers and Seamen in such a manner that they cou'd not have escaped; however it luckily did not turn out so; it wou'd indeed have been a pity for them to have made their exit in that way, as I hope before long

we shall have the pleasure of seeing them do it by the hands of the Hangman."

John Andrews looked at the matter differently. "The officers in general behave more like a parcel of children, of late, than men. Captain —— of the Royal Irish first exposed himself by behaving in a very scandalous manner at the South meeting. . . . He got pretty decently frightened for it. A woman, among the rest, attacked him and threatened to wring his nose." An outbreak may have been what the officers wanted. "But," says Samuel Adams, who acted on his maxim that it is good politics to put and keep the enemy in the wrong, "order was restored, and we proceeded regularly, and finished the business. I am persuaded, were it not for the danger of precipitating a crisis, not a man of them would have been spared."<sup>1</sup>

The whole was a type of the existing situation. Here were the officers, still causing petty disturbances; here too, no doubt, were Tories, contemptuous of the proceedings.

<sup>1</sup> Wells, "Life of Adams," ii, 281.



Deeper still appears the real significance of the occasion. On the one side was the governor, unable, with all the power of the king, to prevent a meeting of the citizens to condemn his presence in the town—for the meeting was the “Port Bill meeting,” adjourned from time to time since the previous May. And on the other side were the citizens, legally protesting and exasperatingly defiant, evidently under perfect self-restraint, determined not to strike the first blow.

The officers took, as usual, a puerile revenge in the form of a burlesque. “A vast number” of them assembled at the Coffee House in King Street, and chose selectmen and an orator, “who deliver’d an oration from the balcony to a crowd of few else beside gaping officers.”<sup>1</sup> Others of them caught a countryman who had been decoyed into buying a musket from a soldier, and tarred and feathered him.

But these were surface trivialities. Beneath them the true situation was grow-

<sup>1</sup> Andrews Letters.

ing worse. Out in the country military stores were being collected at Worcester and at Concord; and over in Parliament the fisheries bill, designed to deprive thousands in America of their living, was sure of passing. At last Franklin, who had stayed in London as long as there seemed anything for him to accomplish, patiently bearing humiliation and insults, on the 20th of March took ship for Philadelphia. It was the sign that there was no further hope of peace.

## CHAPTER VII

### MILITARY PREPARATIONS

**A**S the spring of 1775 advanced, matters took on a constantly more threatening aspect. The governor's force in Boston was steadily increasing, and was approaching a total of four thousand men. Vessels of war were with equal steadiness being added to the little fleet in the harbor. With each budget of news from England it became evident that Parliament would not yield, and at last came word that Lord North had offered a joint resolution that New England was in a state of rebellion, which both houses pledged their lives and fortunes to suppress. With such a military force at his command, and with such moral support from King and Parliament, Gage was in a position to take decided action.

No one could doubt what that action would

be. Since September the province had been gathering its meagre military supplies. It was but common sense to seize them before they could be used. Soon after the new year Gage began his measures. "Genl. Orders," writes disgruntled Lieutenant Barker. "If any officers of the different Regts. are *capable* of taking sketches of a Country, they will send their names to the Dep. Adj. Genl. . . . that is an extraordinary method of wording the order; it might at least have been in a more genteel way; at present it looks as if he doubted whether there were any such." However, there were such, and in February the governor chose Captain Brown and Ensign De Berniere (or Bernicre, as the name is sometimes spelled) and sent them out to map the roads.

The little expedition was somewhat absurd, for the disguise which the officers wore was sufficient to conceal them only from their friends. When, at the first tavern at which they stopped, they remarked that it was a very fine country, the black woman who



waited on them answered, "So it is, and we have got brave fellows to defend it, and if you go any higher you will find it so." "This," admits Ensign De Berniere, whose account of the expedition was left in Boston at the evacuation, and was "printed for the information and amusement of the curious," "this disconcerted us a good deal." From that time on, any one who took the trouble to "eye them attentively" was in no doubt as to their real character.

They went first to Worcester, where it was possible that the governor might wish to send troops, to protect the courts as well as to seize stores. The weather was rough and snowy, and the officers' task correspondingly difficult; the countrymen, by persevering sociability, kept them in an uneasy state of mind. After roughly mapping roads concerning which the general should long before have had accurate information, the two officers made their way to Sudbury, where they hoped to rest with a sympathizer, after walking in a snow-storm for hours. But the town doctor, though long

a stranger at the house, came to call, and the townspeople showed their host various other undesirable attentions, so that in twenty minutes the two officers were glad to leave the place. They arrived again safely at Worcester, "very much fatigued, after walking thirty-two miles between two o'clock and half-after ten at night, through a road that every step we sunk up to the ankles, and it blowing and drifting snow all the way."

In spite of this experience, the two officers, a month later, undertook a similar journey to Concord. In this they succeeded, returning with a rough sketch of the roads, but bringing also their Concord host, who did not think it safe to remain after entertaining them. They brought information that in Concord there were "fourteen cannon (ten iron and four brass) and two cohorns," with "a store of flour, fish, salt, and rice; and a magazine of powder and cartridges."

They might, in their two journeys, have brought better information than that the Concord Whigs "fired their morning gun,

and mounted a guard of ten men at night.” The stores at Concord had far better protection than these, as the two officers should have learned at Framingham, where they watched the drill of the militia company. “After they had done their exercise, one of their commanders spoke a very eloquent speech, recommending patience, coolness, and bravery (which indeed they very much wanted), particularly told them they would always conquer if they did not break, and recommended them to charge us coolly, and wait for our fire, and everything would succeed with them — quoted Cæsar and Pompey, brigadiers Putnam and Ward, and all such great men; put them in mind of Cape Breton, and all the battles they had gained for his majesty in the last war, and observed that the regulars must have been ruined but for them.”

Had the two officers known it, every town in the province had just such a militia company, which at set seasons met, and drilled, and listened to good old-fashioned exhorta-

tions to valor. It would not take long, therefore, for the neighboring towns to send their companies to reinforce the guard of ten men which Concord set over its stores every night. And yet the province was not satisfied with this ancient militia organization, for it had set up another to strengthen it.

The militia was composed, as it had been since the foundation of the colony, of the whole body of male inhabitants of proper military age. In some cases even clergymen drilled in the ranks. More than once this militia had gathered to repel an expected attack of French or Indians; it had stood between the settlers and their foes from the days of Miles Standish down to the French and Indian War. The martial spirit still prevailed among the youth of the colony, and each town took pride in its company. In 1774 John Andrews thus records his innocent delight in the appearance of the Boston trainbands:—

“Am almost every minute taken off with agreeable sight of our militia companies



marching into the Common, as it is a grand field day with us. . . . They now vie with the best troops in his majesties service, being dress'd all in blue uniforms, with drums and fifes to each company dress'd in white uniforms trim'd in y<sup>e</sup> most elegant manner; with a company of Grenadiers in red with every other apparatus, that equal any regular company I ever saw both in appearance and discipline, having a grand band of musick consisting of eight that play nearly equal to that of the 64th. What crowns all is the Cadet company, being perfectly compleat and under the best order you can conceive of, with a band of musick likewise, that perform admirably well. What with these and Paddock's company of artillery make y<sup>e</sup> completest militia in America; not a drummer, fifer, and scarcely a soldier but what are in compleat uniforms and thoroughly instructed in the military exercises."

It was this Boston Cadet company that, at the affront to its leader Hancock had returned its standard to the governor and dis-

banded. Gage knew too well that others of the companies were thoroughly disaffected. In fact, many of the Boston young men left the town before hostilities began, and were ready to join with their country brethren in showing that their military training was worth something.

Yet early in the fall it was recognized in the colony that the militia system was not sufficient, being too slow of movement to meet any such sudden expedition as that which Gage sent to seize the powder. It is not surprising, therefore, to find John Andrews reporting on October 5 the existence of a new body of troops, "which are call'd *minute men*, *i.e.* to be ready at a minute's warning with a fortnight's provision, and ammunition and arms." There is doubt of the origin of this body, but it was first officially accepted in Concord, where the town adopted definite terms of enlistment, the more important of which reads:—

"We will . . . to the utmost of our power and abilities, defend all and every of our

charter rights, liberties, and privileges; and will hold ourselves in readiness at a minute's warning, with arms and ammunition thus to do." <sup>1</sup>

Tradition says that the terms of the enlistment were interpreted literally, and that wherever the minute men went, to the field, the shop, or to church, gun and powder-horn and bullet-pouch were ready to hand. It is scarcely an exaggeration to suppose that, as represented by French's statue, the farmers actually left the plough in the furrow and snatched up the ready rifle.

One further preparation was also made. The rallying point was possibly Worcester, where were the courts and some few stores; but it was more probably Concord. The shortest route to Concord, or to the road between Concord and Boston, was known to the captain of every company of minute men within a hundred miles. But that the captains should be notified of any emergency was essential. A complete system of couriers for

<sup>1</sup> Tolman, "The Concord Minute Man," 12.

spreading news was projected in September, and now was in good working order, so that, with Boston as a radiating point, the summons could be sent over the province with the greatest rapidity. By virtue of his efficiency, trustworthiness, and picturesque personality, Paul Revere is accepted as the type of the men who stood ready for this service.

This system, further, had been tested. The spontaneous response to the Powder Alarm in September had been ready enough, for the men of Connecticut and New Hampshire were in motion before the next day. But through the winter of 1774-1775 there had been minor alarms at each little expedition on which Gage sent his soldiers. By these the new system was proved efficient. Whether the troops marched to Jamaica Pond, to the "punch bowl" in Brookline, or even went, by sea and land, as far as Salem, the militia of the surrounding towns showed a prompt curiosity as to the object of the excursion. These fruitless musters, far from making the minute men callous to alarms,



served to prepare them to meet the great occasion which they foresaw would finally come. For that they were in excellent practice.

As to Concord itself, it had become very important. The Congress, which after its first week in Concord had been sitting in Cambridge, now returned, and from the 22d of March until the 15th of April<sup>1</sup> sat daily in the meeting-house. The Committee of Safety remained still longer, busy with the gathering of supplies. It is within this period that Berniere and Brown came on their spying expedition to Concord, and were directed by a woman to the house of Daniel Bliss. A threat of the Whigs to tar and feather her sent her to the officers for refuge, and word presently came to Bliss that the Whigs "would not let him go out of the town alive

<sup>1</sup> I take many facts in the following pages from the three pamphlets by George Tolman, "The Concord Minute Man," "Preliminaries of Concord Fight," and "Events of April Nineteenth." These, published by the Concord Antiquarian Society, are invaluable to the student of this period.

that morning." This fate the officers and their host avoided by leaving in the night. What became of the woman is not said, but we may be easy about her: no injury, and in fact no serious indignity, was put upon a woman in New England at this period. The officers returned to Boston with a report of the stores in Concord.

This may have increased the anxiety of the Committee of Safety. Already they had voted, "requiring Colonel Barrett of Concord to engage a sufficient number of faithful men to guard the Colony's magazines in that town; to keep a suitable number of teams in constant readiness, by day and night, to remove the stores; and to provide couriers to alarm the neighboring towns, on receiving information of any movements of the British troops."<sup>1</sup> A watch was kept upon the British movements; and finally, when, on the 15th, Warren sent Paul Revere from Boston with warning of suspicious movements, the Committee felt that soon Gage must strike. On

<sup>1</sup> "Preliminaries," 23-24.

the 18th it ordered the removal of some of the stores. "That very night," says Tolman, without knowledge of affairs in Boston, the work was begun.

Meanwhile, in response to another vote of the committee, the British had been under close observation. The vote was that "members of this Committee belonging to the towns of Charlestown, Cambridge, and Roxbury, be required at the Province expense to procure at least two men for a watch every night to be placed in each of these towns, and that said members be in readiness to send couriers forward to the towns where the magazines are placed, when sallies are made by the army by night." In view of these preparations, it scarcely needs to be said that there was nothing accidental about Concord fight. Some day Gage was bound to strike at Concord, and for that day the Whigs were ready.

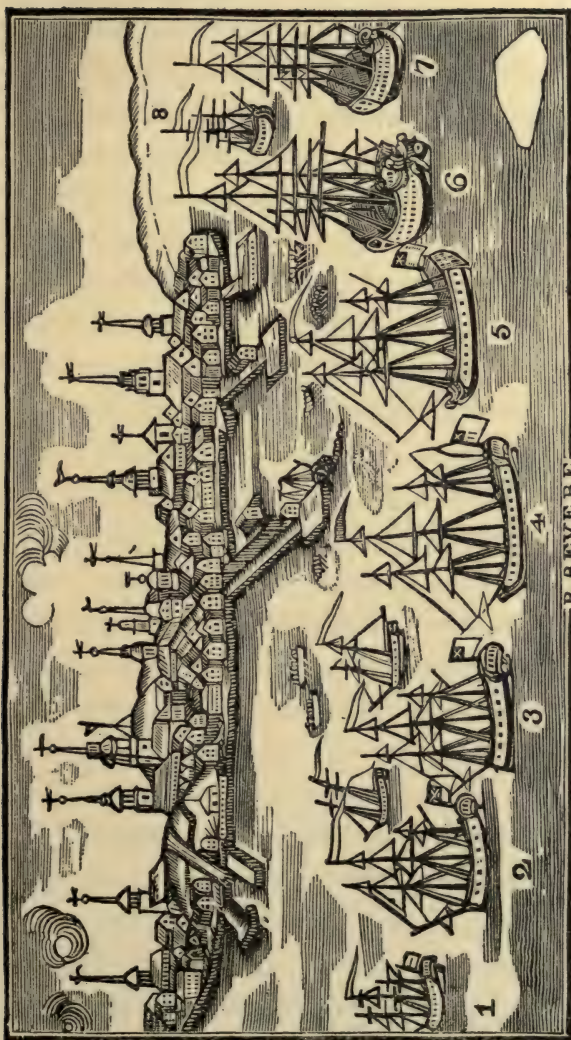
It is now that Paul Revere comes prominently into the course of events. Revere was a Boston craftsman of Huguenot descent, who was and is well known as a silversmith,

engraver, and cartoonist. His prints and articles of silverware sell to-day for high prices, and his house in North Square has recently been fitted up as a public museum, chiefly on account of a single act at a critical moment. One is glad to know, however, that Revere's fame is not accidental. His pictures are historically interesting; we should be the poorer without his prints which give views of Boston, and without his picture of the Massacre. His silver—we have mentioned his punch-bowl for the "immortal Ninety-two"—is usually beautiful. From the foundry which he established later in life came cannon, and church-bells which are in use to-day. And finally his famous ride, the object of which would have been brought about had Revere been stopped at the outset, was but one out of many.

"In the year 1773," says Revere of himself,<sup>1</sup> "I was employed by the selectmen of

<sup>1</sup> After the Revolution, Revere wrote a narrative of the events in which he was concerned. It is to be found in several books, notably Goff's "Life of Revere."





REVERE'S PICTURE OF BOSTON IN 1768.

the town of Boston to carry the account of the Destruction of the Tea to New York, and afterwards, 1774, to carry their despatches to New York and Philadelphia for calling a Congress; and afterwards to Congress several times." Revere does not mention the fact that he was himself a member of the Tea-Party. When he goes on to speak of still more important events, he suppresses the fact that he was one of the leaders, if not the chief leader, of the Boston artisans.

"In the fall of 1774, and winter of 1775, I was one of upwards of thirty, chiefly mechanics, who formed ourselves into a committee for the purpose of watching the movements of the British soldiers, and gaining every intelligence of the movements of the Tories. We held our meetings at the Green Dragon Tavern. We were so careful that our meetings should be kept secret, that every time we met, every person swore upon the Bible that they would not discover any of our transactions but to Messrs. Hancock, Adams, Doctors Warren, Church, and one or

two more. . . . In the winter, towards the spring, we frequently took turns, two and two, to watch the soldiers, by patrolling the streets all night."

Such was the watch, then, kept upon the royalists, and such were the preparations to receive the troops when they should march out. We know now that Gage was informed of them, for among those whom Revere names as confidants of the mechanics there was a traitor to the cause. Yet though Gage knew of the organization of the Whigs, of its efficiency he had apparently not the glimmer of an idea. It was with no expectation of serious results that, when at last he learned that the resolution declaring the colonies to be in rebellion had passed Parliament, he slowly put himself in motion to seize the stores of the provincials.

The Americans were keenly aware of all his movements. There were two common methods of leaving the town, one by the Neck, the other over Charlestown ferry. But these routes lay through towns, either Rox-

bury or Charlestown, and to march so openly meant to give the alarm. The Americans were ready for Gage to take a third route: across the Charles by means of boats, and then by unfrequented roads until striking the highway at Cambridge Common. This way the Whigs suspected he might choose, and this they found he did.

Gage's preparations were almost open. The boats of the men-of-war were hauled up and repaired at the foot of the Common. On the 14th, in the night, they were launched, and moored at the sterns of the men-of-war. On the 15th was given out in general orders that "The Grenadiers and Light Infantry in order to learn Grenadr. Exercise and new evolutions are to be off all duties till further orders.' — This," remarks Lieutenant Barker of the King's Own, "I suppose is by way of a blind. I dare say they have something for them to do."

This "something" was either one or both of two objectives: the stores at Concord, and the persons of Adams and Hancock,



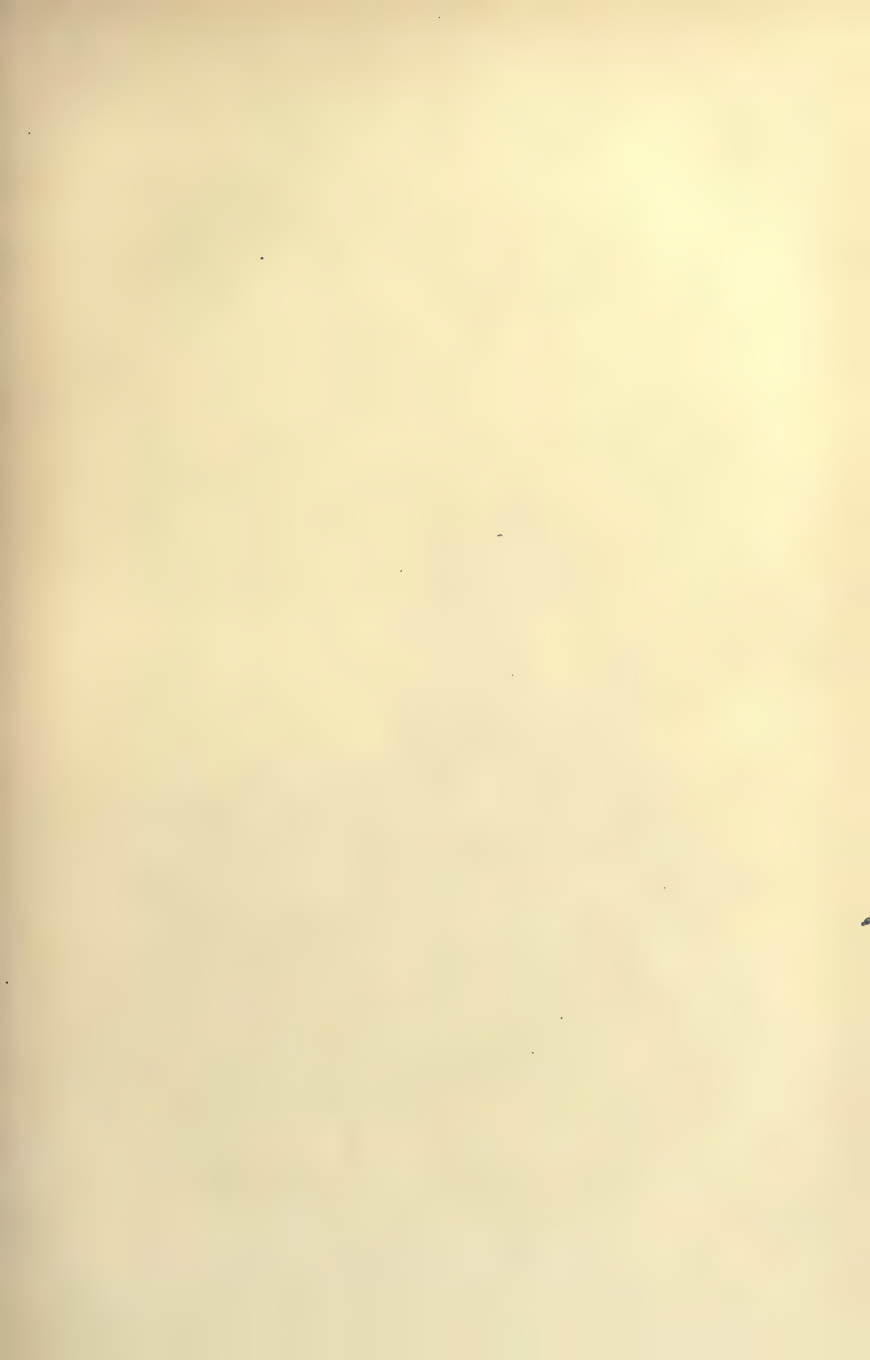
then known to be staying at the house of the Reverend Jonas Clark in Lexington. That this latter objective was seriously considered, at least by the Americans, we shall see from Revere's narrative. There never has been proof that Gage endeavored to seize either them or Warren. But in any case the stores were in danger, and strict watch was kept.

There was evidence enough of a coming expedition. As before the Massacre, there were soldiers' rumors that something was to happen, and the name of Concord was whispered about. On the night of the 18th word came in from the country that parties of officers were riding here and there. This same notice was sent by vigilant patriots to Hancock at Lexington. In Boston itself different persons noticed that the troops were astir. Word of all this came from various sources to Warren who, relinquishing for a while his sittings with the Committee of Safety, had for some days been working for it at the post of responsibility and danger.

Warren finally decided that he must act. He sent for the men who had pledged themselves for this service, and gave them his directions.

One of these men was William Dawes, of whom, except for his actions on this night, we know little. Obeying his instructions, he took horse, and rode across the Neck to go to Lexington by way of Roxbury and Watertown.

"About ten o'clock," writes Revere, "Dr. Warren sent in great haste for me, and begged that I would immediately set off for Lexington, where Messrs. Hancock and Adams were, and acquaint them of the movement, and that it was thought they were the objects." Revere was ready. In returning on the 15th he had arranged signals to his friends in Charlestown to inform them what route the British would take; he knew, also, how he should cross — for the ferry was closed at nine o'clock — and where he should get his horse. From Warren's Revere went home, got his "boots and surtout," and started. Two of his friends rowed him to Charles-





THE OLD NORTH CHURCH

(From which Paul Revere's signals were displayed.)



town in a boat which was kept ready for the purpose, another was already despatched to make certain of the route the British would take.

Of the person and the actions of this other friend there has been much dispute. The weight of evidence seems to show that on making sure of the route of the British, he went to the Old North Church, still standing in Salem Street, and from its steeple displayed the signal. I make no positive assertion that he spent any time in watching the British; Revere, knowing the route, may have signalled in order to make sure that the news crossed the river, even though he himself might fail. The person who displayed the signals seems to have been one Newman, the sexton of the church, rather than Captain Pulling, a friend of Revere's. At any rate, the signals were hung while Revere was crossing the river to Charlestown. He passed unobserved not far from the *Somerset* man-of-war, and remarks that "it was then young flood, the ship was winding, and the moon was rising." On landing, his Charlestown

friends told him they had already seen the signals. Revere (if we still suppose that he needed to make sure of the route) himself must have taken a look at the signal lanterns, as in Longfellow's poem. "Two if by sea." This poetical language means merely that the troops were preparing to cross the river in their boats. This is the traditional account of Revere's action. A contemporary memorandum states, however, that on landing Revere "informed [us] that the T [troops] were actually in the boats."

"I got a horse," says Revere, "of Deacon Larkin," which horse the deacon never saw again. Before Revere started he again received warning that there were British officers on the road, but he was quite cool enough to take note of the beauty of the night, "about eleven o'clock and very pleasant." Crossing Charlestown Neck, he started on the road for Cambridge, when he saw before him two horsemen under a tree. As Revere drew near, they pushed out into the moonlight, and he saw their uniforms. One of them blocked

the road, the other tried to take him, and Revere, turning back, galloped first for Charlestown and then "pushed for the Medford road." Revere made the turn successfully; the officer who followed, ignorant of the locality, mired himself in a clay pond. Revere's road was now clear. He reached Medford, and roused the captain of the minute men; then, hastening on through Menotomy, now Arlington, and thence to Lexington, he "alarmed almost every house." He reached Lexington about midnight, and went directly to the house of the Reverend Jonas Clark, where Hancock and Adams were sleeping under a guard of the militia. Revere asked admittance, and the sergeant informed him that the family had requested that no noise be made.

"Noise!" replied Revere in the phrase familiar to every schoolboy, "you'll have noise enough before long — the regulars are coming out!"<sup>1</sup> The family was accordingly at once aroused.

<sup>1</sup> Most of these facts are from Frothingham's "Siege," 57-59, and from Revere's letter.

Meanwhile the troops had actually started. "Between 10 and 11 o'clock," says Lieutenant Barker, "all the Grenadiers and Light Infantry of the Army, making about 600 Men, (under command of Lt. Coll. Smith of the 10th and Major Pitcairn of the Marines,) embarked and were landed on the opposite shore of Cambridge Marsh." This phrasing is not immediately clear to one of to-day. In those days every regiment had two special companies, the heavy-armed grenadiers, so called because they originally carried hand-grenades, and the light-infantry company. These were frequently detached for special duty, as the present, when the Light Infantry would be used for flanking purposes. Thus every regiment in Boston was represented in the expedition — and we may add in the list of killed and wounded on the following day. The number is generally estimated at eight hundred. They were commanded by the colonel who had been longest on duty in New England. Smith was in character too much like Gage himself. The general



would have done better to send one of his brigadiers.

One at least of the brigadiers was reasonably alert. According to Stedman, Lord Percy was crossing the Common after learning from the general that a secret expedition had just started. Perceiving a group of men talking together, the nobleman joined them in time to hear one say, "The British troops have marched, but have missed their aim."

"What aim?" asked Lord Percy.

The reply was, "The cannon at Concord."

Percy, in much perturbation, at once returned to the general and told him that his secret was known. Poor Gage complained that his confidence had been betrayed, "for that he had communicated his design to one person only besides his lordship."

The student of the time sees in this story a side-thrust at Mrs. Gage, on whom, as an American, the officers were ready to blame the knowledge of secrets which were gained by Yankee shrewdness alone. In this case we have seen that it was Gage that betrayed

himself to the eyes of Revere's volunteer watch. The general hastily sent to order the guard at the Neck to let no one leave the town. But he was too late: Dawes was gone, Revere was on the water, and the news was out.

The expedition was bungled at the very start. "After getting over the Marsh, where we were wet up to the knees," says Lieutenant Barker, "we were halted in a dirty road and stood there till two o'clock in the morning, waiting for provisions to be brought from the boats and to be divided, and which most of the men threw away, having carried some with 'em." As they waited there they might have heard signal guns, and learned that in a constantly widening circle of villages, "the bells were rung backward, the drums they were beat." The news had three hours' start of them. At last, at two on the 19th, having "waded through a very long ford up to our middles," wet, dirty, and loaded with the heavy equipment of the period, they started on their march.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE NINETEENTH OF APRIL

**J**OHAN HANCOCK never showed better in his life than on the morning of the 19th of April. Many times the Tories had tried to win him over. Hutchinson himself had written: "At present, Hancock and Adams are at variance. Some of my friends blow the coals, and I hope to see a good effect." Yet Adams and Hancock were still enlisted in the same cause on this morning when blood was to be shed. And Hancock, when roused from his sleep at midnight, was hot with the desire to take his musket and fight on Lexington Green.

Adams and his friends — among them his sweetheart — dissuaded him. The two Whig leaders finally took the road to Woburn, and in the succeeding days passed on to Worcester and Hartford, planned the taking

of Ticonderoga, and, joining the other delegates from Boston, in May met with the second Continental Congress. If Gage had meant to seize Hancock and Adams, he had lost his chance. The outcome lay in the hands of the fighting men.

Revere waited at Mr. Clark's house for about half an hour, when Dawes arrived. The two then set out for Concord, and were joined on the way by "a young Dr. Prescott, whom we found to be a high son of liberty."<sup>1</sup> They began to rouse the farmers along the road, and had already gone halfway when they saw in the road horsemen whom Revere knew at once to be British officers. Revere and Prescott, blocked in front and rear, turned into a pasture; but this was a trap where other officers were waiting. Prescott, knowing the country, put his horse at a fence and got away; Revere found himself surrounded by six horsemen who, with swords and pistols ready, ordered him to dismount. There was nothing for him to do but comply.

<sup>1</sup> Revere's narrative.



Dawes, who had been behind upon the road, turned to go back, and was pursued. He rode into a farmyard, shouted out as to friends in waiting, and frightened off his pursuers. Both he and Prescott were useful in spreading the alarm farther.

But Revere was caught. His chief captor examined him, and got slight satisfaction. "I told him, and added that their troops had caught aground in passing the river and that there would be five hundred Americans there in a short time, for I had alarmed the country all the way up." His anxious captors consulted together, and were conducting him back toward Lexington, "when the militia fired a volley of guns, which seemed to alarm them very much." They asked if there were any other road to Cambridge, took Revere's horse, and left him. He hurried back to Lexington, to give Hancock and Adams the news that sent them on their way. Revere himself remained long enough to save a trunk of papers belonging to Hancock.

Meanwhile the militia of the town, alarmed by Revere, assembled and waited for the troops. They sent two messengers toward Cambridge to bring certain news, but each of these blundered into the advancing regulars, and were seized and held. The militia waited for some hours, but on hearing no word they were finally dismissed, with a warning to be ready to come together again instantly. Some went to their homes, some to the near-by tavern, to finish out the night.

News came at last to Captain Parker that the British were scarcely a mile away, and in such numbers that his company could not hope to oppose them. He called his men together, nevertheless, "but only with a view to determine what to do, when and where to meet, and to dismiss and disperse."<sup>1</sup> The minute men were still standing in their ranks when the British suddenly appeared.

The succeeding events caused much controversy at the time. Gage reported "that the troops were fired upon by the rebels out

<sup>1</sup> Clark's narrative.

of the meeting-house, and the neighboring houses, as well as by those that were in the field; and that the troops only returned the fire, and passed on their way to Concord.”<sup>1</sup> But in number the little company of minute men were, according to Revere, who had just passed through them, “about fifty”; the Reverend Jonas Clark says “fifty or sixty, or even seventy.” Had there been even the two or three hundred of the British reports, these men, drawn up without protection on an open green, are scarcely likely to have attacked a force of more than twice their number. The logic of the situation seems against Gage.

There is one more factor to consider. It is well enough known that both the British officers, and the Americans as a whole, were under instructions not to fire, and earnest to obey. But what of the British privates? Their eagerness for blood at the time of the Massacre was so great as to account for that tragedy; it was now not likely to be less. There were even among the troops at Lex-

<sup>1</sup> Clark's narrative.

ington two companies from one of the "Sam Adams regiments." When we learn from Lieutenant Barker that after the skirmish "the Men were so wild they cou'd hear no orders," we may even suspect that, as at the Massacre, the men may have taken matters into their own hands.

"For," says the minister of Lexington, "no sooner did they come in sight of our company, but one of them, supposed to be an officer of rank, was heard to say to the troops, 'Damn them, we will have them!' — Upon this the troops shouted aloud, huzza'd, and rushed furiously towards our men. — About the same time, three officers (supposed to be Col. Smith, Major Pitcairn and another officer) advanced, on horse back, to the front of the body, and coming within five or six rods of the militia, one of them cried out, 'ye villains, ye Rebels, disperse; Damn you, disperse!' or words to this effect. One of them (whether the same, or not, is not easily determined) said, 'Lay down your arms, Damn you, why don't you lay down your







THE BATTLE OF LEXINGTON

arms !' — The second of these officers, about this time, fired a pistol towards the militia, as they were dispersing. — The foremost, who was within a few yards of our men, brandishing his sword, and then pointing towards them, said, with a loud voice, to the troops, 'Fire ! — By God, fire !' — which was instantly followed by a discharge of arms from the said troops, succeeded by a very heavy and close fire upon our party, dispersing, so long as any of them were within reach. — Eight were left dead upon the ground ! Ten were wounded." <sup>1</sup>

This is the best contemporary account which we have of the affair. It is evident from his careful language and semi-legal terms that the Reverend Mr. Clark, though not on the ground until half an hour afterwards, took all possible pains to gather the facts, and considered himself upon oath in reporting them. He was himself a witness of the exultation of the troops at their victory, and expresses his indignation.

<sup>1</sup> Clark's narrative.

Tradition gives Major Pitcairn, of the Marines, a prominent part in the affair. "A good man," says Stiles, "in a bad cause," and adds that had Pitcairn ever been able to say that he was sure the Americans fired first, he would have believed him. Honest Major Pitcairn could only state his belief.

So the first blood in the Revolution was spilt. The death of one of the Americans, Jonathan Harrington, was pitiful: shot within sight of his home, he crawled to the door, and expired at his wife's feet. To the heavy volleys they received, the Americans returned but a scattering fire; some of them did not fire at all.<sup>1</sup> Two British privates were wounded, and Pitcairn's horse.

The troops, as soon as they could be marshalled again, fired a volley and gave three cheers, rested for a little while, and marched on toward Concord. There, since early morning, had gathered some of the militia from Bedford and Lincoln, and about sunrise the little company marched out of

<sup>1</sup> Clark's narrative.



town. "We thought," says Amos Barrett quaintly, "we would go and meet the British. We marched down towards Lexington about a mile or mile and a half, and we saw them coming." But on seeing their numbers the militia turned back, "and marched before them with our drums and fifes going, and also the British. We had grand musick."<sup>1</sup> The provincials halted once or twice on the hill that ran along the high road, and came at last to the liberty pole, overlooking the town. "The Yankees," records Lieutenant Barker of the King's Own, "had that hill but left it to us; we expected they wou'd have made a stand there, but they did not chuse it." The militia, still withdrawing before superior numbers, retreated across the river, and the British occupied the town.

In place of the five bridges which to-day, within a mile of the meeting-house, encircle Concord, the town in 1775 had but two. The first of these was the South Bridge, on the present Main Street route to Marlborough

<sup>1</sup> Letter of Amos Barrett, privately printed.

and South Acton. The other was the North Bridge, on a highway now abandoned, which in those days led to Acton, Carlisle, and Bedford. Colonel Smith took possession of both these bridges, and while his men searched the town for stores, he sent a detachment across the North Bridge to the farm of Colonel Barrett, where it was known that supplies had been kept. Of our two British informants of the events of the day, Ensign Berniere guided the troops that went to the Barrett farm, Lieutenant Barker remained with a detachment that stayed to guard the bridge. Meanwhile, on a hillside beyond the river, almost within gunshot of the bridge, the militia watched the first detachment pass on its errand, and counted the numbers of the redcoats that held the nearer side of the passage.

Colonel Smith speedily learned that his journey had been nearly in vain. As we have seen, already on the night before, without news from Boston, the removal of the stores had been begun. The alarm brought

in by Dr. Prescott hastened the work. Men and boys, and even women and girls, were busy in hiding the stores or carrying them away. Some of them were skilfully secreted under the very eyes of the British. The troops found little. In the town some few gun-carriages, barrels of flour, wooden mess-bowls, and wooden spoons were found and destroyed. At Colonel Barrett's, acknowledges Berniere, "we did not find so much as we expected, but what there was we destroyed." He was unaware that the cannon had been laid in a ploughed field, and concealed by turning a furrow over them, the work continuing even while the troops were in sight.

Of proceedings in the town we get the best picture from the petition of Martha Moulton, "widow-woman," who in her deposition "humbly sheweth: That on the 19th day of April, 1775, in the forenoon, the town of Concord, wherein I dwell, was beset with an army of regulars, who, in a hostile manner, entered the town, and drawed up in form before the house in which I live; and there they con-

tinued on the green, feeding their horses within five feet of the door; and about fifty or sixty of them was in and out of the house, calling for water and what they wanted, for about three hours." The neighbors had fled, and poor Mrs. Moulton was left with "no person near but an old man of eighty-five years, and myself seventy-one years old, and both very infirm. It may easily be imagined what a sad condition your petitioner must be in." But she committed herself to Providence, "and was very remarkably helpt with so much fortitude of mind, as to wait on them, as they called, with what we had, — chairs for Major Pitcairn and four or five more officers, — who sat at the door viewing their men. At length your petitioner had, by degrees, cultivated so much favor as to talk a little with them. When all on a sudden they had set fire to the great gun-carriages just by the house, and while they were in flames your petitioner saw smoke arise out of the Town House higher than the ridge of the house. Then your petitioner did put her



life, as it were, in her hand, and ventured to beg of the officers to send some of their men to put out the fire; but they took no notice, only sneered. Your petitioner, seeing the Town House on fire, and must in a few minutes be past recovery, did yet venture to expostulate with the officers just by her, as she stood with a pail of water in her hand, begging them to send, &c. When they only said, 'O, mother, we won't do you any harm!' 'Don't be concerned, mother,' and such like talk." But the widow Moulton persisted, until "at last, by one pail of water and another, they did send and extinguish the fire."<sup>1</sup> It is pleasant to know that the courageous old lady received three pounds for her services, and that the smoke which rose higher than the Town House served only to give the signal for Concord fight.

All this while the numbers of the militia had been growing. They were stationed on the slope of Punkatasset Hill, and from minute to minute squads and companies

<sup>1</sup> Frothingham's "Siege," Appendix, 369-370.

came in from the neighboring towns. It has been made a reproach to Concord that so few of her men were there, but they were engaged in the far more important duty of saving the stores. Nevertheless, one of her militia companies was on the ground, with those individuals who were able to hurry back after putting the stores in safety. The Carlisle and Acton men had joined the waiting provincials, whose numbers at last became so threatening that the guard at the bridge, in full sight of them, became uneasy.

The militia became uneasy also. Beyond the bridge, in the town, they saw more smoke than seemed warranted by merely burning cannon wheels and spoons. The officers consulted, and Captain Smith, of Lincoln, urged that the bridge be forced. Davis of Acton, speaking of his company, said, "I haven't a man that's afraid to go!" The movement was decided upon, and the militia, in double file, marched down toward the bridge. The Acton company had the lead, with Davis at its head; beside him marched Major John

Buttrick, of Concord, in command, with Lieutenant-Colonel Robinson, of Westford, as a volunteer aid. As the provincials drew near, the British hastily retreated across the bridge, and their commander awkwardly marshalled his three companies one behind the other, so that only the first could fire. As some of the soldiers began to take up the planks of the bridge, the Americans hastened their march, and presently the British fired. There is no question that they began the fight, with first a few scattering guns, "up the river," and then a volley at close range.

The whole was seen by the Concord minister, William Emerson, from his study in the Manse, close by. For a moment, he records, he feared that the fire was not to be returned; but he need not have doubted. The British volley killed the Acton captain, Davis, and Hosmer, his adjutant. Then Major Buttrick, leaping into the air as he turned to his men, cried, "Fire, fellow-soldiers; for God's sake, fire!"

"We were then," records Amos Barrett,

of the second company, "all ordered to fire that could fire and not kill our own men." The return fire, though from the awkward position of double file, was effective. Two of the British were killed outright, another fell wounded, and the whole, apparently doubting their ability to hold the bridge, hastily retreated upon the main body. "We did not follow them," records Barrett. "There were eight or ten that were wounded and a-running and a-hobbling about, looking back to see if we were after them."

As reminders of the fight, besides the bridge which Concord, many years after its disappearance, rebuilt on the centenary of the day, the town points to the graves of the two soldiers killed in the fight, who were buried close by. Another memorial is seen in the bullet-hole in the Elisha Jones house near at hand, at whose door the proprietor showed himself as the regulars hastily retreated. On being fired at, Jones speedily removed himself from the scene, and from subsequent history.



There were no further immediate consequences. The Americans crossed the bridge, and stationed themselves behind the ridge that overlooked the town; the search-party that had gone to Colonel Barrett's returned. "They had taken up some planks of the bridge," says Berniere of the Americans, though the work was done by the British. "Had they destroyed it, we were most certainly all lost; however, we joined the main body." Colonel Smith now had his force together, and had done all that could be done, yet for two hours more he, by futile marchings and countermarchings, "discovered great Fickleness<sup>1</sup> and Inconstancy of Mind." The delay was serious; he had earlier sent to Gage for reinforcements, and he ought now to have considered that every minute was bringing more Americans to the line of his retreat. When, about noon, he started for Boston, the situation was very grave.

The British left the town as they had come

<sup>1</sup> "Feeckleness," Emerson's letter, "Source Book of the American Revolution," 146.

in, with the grenadiers on the highway, the light infantry flanking them on the ridge. On this elevation, above the house he later inhabited, Hawthorne laid the scene of the duel between Septimius Felton and the British officer. At Merriam's Corner the ridge ends. Here the flankers joined the main body, and together noted the approach of the Americans, who had dogged them. The regulars turned and fired, only to be driven onward by an accurate response. "When I got there," says Amos Barrett, "a great many lay dead, and the road was bloody." From that time ensued a scattering general engagement along the line of the retreat.

In this kind of fighting the odds were greatly with the Americans, as Gage, with his memory of Braddock's defeat, might have foreseen. The British complained with exasperation that the militia would not stand up to them. The provincials knew better than to do so. Lightly armed, carrying little besides musket or rifle, powder horn and bullet-pouch,— and all these smaller and

lighter than the British equipment,— the farmers were able with ease to keep up with the troops, to fire from cover, to load, and then again to regain the distance lost. Every furlong saw their numbers increase. At Merriam's Corner came in the Reading company ; before long the survivors of the Lexington company joined the fight to take their revenge ; and from that time on, from north, from south, and from the east, the minute men and militia came hurrying up to join the chase.

Before five miles were passed, the retreat had degenerated into a mere rout. "We at first," says Berniere, "kept our order and returned their fire as hot as we received it, but when we arrived within a mile of Lexington, our ammunition began to fail, and the light companies were so fatigued with flanking they were scarce able to act, and a great number of wounded scarce able to get forward, made a great confusion ; Col. Smith (our commanding officer) had received a wound through his leg, a number of officers were also wounded, so that we began to run rather

than retreat in order. . . . At last, after we got through Lexington, the officers got to the front and presented their bayonets, and told the men that if they advanced they should die: Upon this they began to form under a heavy fire." There was, however, no hope for them unless they should be reinforced.

In the nick of time the succor came. Early in the morning Gage had received word that the country was alarmed, and started to send out reinforcements. There were the usual delays; among other mistakes, they waited for Pitcairn, who was with the first detachment. The relief party as finally made up comprised about twelve hundred men, with two six-pounder field-pieces, under Lord Percy. Percy went out through Roxbury with his band playing Yankee Doodle, and as he went a quick-witted lad reminded him of Chevy Chase. More than once before night Percy must have thought of the Whig youngster. He was momentarily delayed at the Cambridge bridge, where the Committee of Safety had taken up the planks, but had frugally



stored them in full view of the road. Percy relaid some of the planks and hurried on with his guns, leaving behind his baggage train and hospital supplies, which were presently captured by a company headed by a warlike minister. Percy was again delayed on Cambridge Common for want of a guide; when again he was able to push on he spared no time, and reached Lexington at the critical moment. He formed his men into a hollow square, to protect Smith's exhausted men, who threw themselves down on the ground, "their tongues hanging out of their mouths like those of dogs after a chase."<sup>1</sup> Percy turned on the militia his two field-pieces, "which our people," grimly remarks Mr. Clark, writing after Bunker Hill, "were not so well acquainted with then, as they have been since." Percy had the satisfaction, which both Berniere and Barker express, of silencing the provincials.

<sup>1</sup> This quotation from Stedman, himself a British officer, is perhaps as well known as Revere's midnight remark, already given.

He knew too well, however, that the Americans were willing to be quiet only because they awaited their own reinforcements. Every minute of delay was dangerous, for now the American military leaders were gathering. If Hancock and Adams had left the field, Warren hastened to it. We know some of his sayings as he left Boston. "They have begun it, — that either party can do; and we'll end it, — that only one can do." To the remark, "Well, they are gone out," he replied, "Yes, and we will be up with them before night." Warren probably was present at a meeting of the Committee of Safety which was held that morning, but his biographer says: "I am unable to locate him until the afternoon, about the time Lord Percy's column rescued Colonel Smith's party from entire destruction, which was at two o'clock."

Warren was no mere adviser. With General Heath he had been planning for the work of the day, and when, after half an hour's rest, Percy's troops moved onward, the

time came for the measures to be put into effect. Warren went with Heath to the scene of battle. Yet little could be done in organized form, at least in the open country, and the minute men continued to pick off the British. But when the troops were among houses, and in revenge for their losses began to plunder<sup>1</sup> and burn, the Americans for the first time began to close in. Many of them fired from barricaded houses, and were killed in consequence. The Danvers company, the only one that tried to fight as a body, were caught between the main column of the regulars and a strong flanking party, and many were killed in an improvised enclosure. But even without defences the Americans became very bold, and the fight fiercer. Warren, rashly exposing himself, had a pin shot out of his hair. Percy, on the other hand, lost a button from his waistcoat. Nothing can explain the comparatively slight

<sup>1</sup> "The plundering was shameful," says Lieutenant Barker indignantly. See also depositions in Frothingham's "Siege," Appendices.

losses of the British except the rapidity of their march to safety. As it was, the regulars were almost worn out with their exertions when they saw ahead of them the hills of Charlestown, and looking across the Back Bay, might perceive on the slopes of Beacon Hill half the population of Boston watching their disgrace.

Boston had been in suspense since early morning. All the Whigs had suspected the meaning of Gage's preparations, and the town was no sooner astir than the news was abroad that the expedition had started. Next came word that an officer had come in haste with a message for Gage. At about eight came news of the death of five men in Lexington. Already Lord Percy's detachment was parading, waiting for the Marines, who in turn waited for their absent commander. Thousands of people were in the street, and even the schoolboys were running about, for Master Lovell had dismissed his school with the words, "War's begun, and school's done." Through the day came con-



flicting rumors. "About twelve o'clock it was gave out by the General's Aide camps that no person was kill'd, and that a single gun had not been fir'd, which report was variously believ'd."<sup>1</sup> Fairly correct accounts of the fight at Lexington began to come in, embellished with the addition that men had been killed in the meeting-house. In the afternoon people began to watch from the hills for the return of the troops, and before sunset the noise of firing was heard.

Of the three British commanders, Lord Percy was the only one who displayed any military ability. He showed it in the route which he chose for his retreat. From Cambridge Common, where at last he arrived, the road to Boston was long, and was broken by the bridge whose difficult passage in the morning he remembered. Therefore he avoided it — and wisely, for the planks of the bridge were up again, and this time in use as barricades, while the militia were ready for him. Instead, Percy shook off

<sup>1</sup> Andrews Letters.

many of his waylayers, and saved some miles of march, by taking the direct road to Charlestown. Yet even this route was hard beset. "I stood upon the hills in town," says Andrews, "and saw the engagement very plain." Many a Whig exulted as he watched, many a Tory cursed, at the sight of the weary regulars struggling forward, and of red figures that dropped and lay still. Percy was barely in time. Had the men of Essex, whose strong regiment arrived just too late, been quick enough to intercept them, and resolute enough to throw themselves across the retreat, it is more than likely that Percy must have surrendered, for his ammunition was almost gone. The exasperation of the Americans at losing their prey was later expressed in a court-martial of the Essex colonel. At any rate, Percy was not headed, and the regulars at last streamed across Charlestown Neck, to find protection under the guns of the fleet.

"Thus," grumbles Lieutenant Barker, "ended this expedition, which from begin-

ning to end was as ill plan'd and ill executed as it was possible to be. . . . For a few trifling Stores the Grenadiers and Light Infantry had a march of about 50 miles (going and returning) and in all human probability must every Man have been cut off if the Brigade had not fortunately come to their Assistance."

Speaking for the reinforcing brigade, Lord Percy confessed that he had learned something. "Whoever looks upon them [the Americans] merely as an irregular mob will find himself much mistaken. They have men among them who know very well what they are about, having been employed as rangers against the Indians and Arcadians. . . . Nor are several of their men void of a spirit of enthusiasm, . . . for many of them concealed themselves in houses, and advanced within ten yards to fire at me and other officers, though they were morally certain of being put to death. . . . For my part I never believed, I confess, that they would have attacked the King's troops, or have had

the perseverance I found in them yesterday.”<sup>1</sup>

This was the day which Massachusetts now celebrates as Patriots’ Day. Of her sons forty-nine were killed, thirty-nine were wounded, and five were taken prisoners. Berniere’s figures of the British losses are 73 killed, 174 wounded, and 26 missing. The totals, for a day more important, as says Bancroft, than Agincourt or Blenheim, are very small. But the significance of the day was indeed enormous. Previously, said Warren, not above fifty persons in the province had expected bloodshed, and the ties to England were still strong. Within ten weeks Warren himself had written of England as “home.” After this day there was no turning back from bloodshed, and no American ever again spoke of Britain by the endearing name.

And the military situation was entirely changed. In the morning Gage was still the nominal governor of the province, free

<sup>1</sup> “Memorial History of Boston,” iii, 102.



to come and go at will. At night he looked out upon a circle of hostile camp-fires. "From a plentiful town," says Berniere mournfully, "we were reduced to the disagreeable necessity of living on salt provisions, and fairly blocked up in Boston."

## CHAPTER IX

### BOSTON BELEAGUERED

**G**AGE and his army were at first surrounded by a mere collection of militia companies. As the pursuit ceased on the evening of the 19th the baffled Americans withdrew from the range of the guns of the fleet. As well as they could they gathered into their organizations and made some kind of a camp, sleeping either out of doors, or in convenient houses. A watch was set at Charlestown Neck, and at Roxbury Prescott of Pepperell and his men stood on guard against a sortie. The circuit between these points, comprising the whole sweep of the Charles River and the Back Bay, was likewise occupied. Headquarters were at Cambridge. On the following days men from the more distant towns came in, until before long the minute men and militia from the

adjoining provinces, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, were upon the ground.

Some of the records are striking. The men of Nottingham, New Hampshire, gathered by noon of the 20th and, after being joined by men of the neighboring towns, set out at two o'clock. "At dusk," says Bancroft, "they reached Haverhill Ferry, a distance of twenty-seven miles, having run rather than marched; they halted in Andover only for refreshments, and, traversing fifty-five miles in less than twenty hours, by sunrise of the twenty-first paraded on Cambridge common."<sup>1</sup>

Israel Putnam, working on his farm in Brooklyn, Connecticut, received the news the morning after the fight at Concord. He left his work at once, and, mounting a horse, started out to rouse the militia, who, upon mustering, chose him leader. As his idea of a leader was one who went in front, he set out at once for Boston, ordering them to follow. He arrived in Cambridge at the time when the Nottingham men are reported

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft, iv, 535.

as parading, "having ridden the same horse a hundred miles in eighteen hours."<sup>1</sup>

Others followed in similar haste. Among them, Benedict Arnold first began to attract to himself public notice. Sabine says of him, "I am inclined to believe, that he was a finished scoundrel from early manhood to his grave." Nevertheless, his fiery nature kept him for a time with the Americans, and at the very outset he showed his independent spirit, having characteristically refused to "wait for proper orders." From New Hampshire came Stark, the hero of the frontier wars. And from all the towns came the militia leaders, who, gathering their companies into regiments, began the loose organization and crude subordination which should make of the crowd an army.

In all this convergence of the militia toward Boston, there was one side current. This set toward Marshfield, where for some weeks had been a detachment of regulars. During this time there had been peace in the town but strong feeling on both sides — Marshfield had

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft, iv, 536.



already produced a general for the king, and now was about to give one to the provincials. There had been one or two threatening demonstrations from neighboring towns, which now were repeated in earnest. On hearing the news from Lexington and Concord, the militia of the neighborhood gathered for an attack on the regulars. But they came too late. The British were embarking at Brant Rock, hastened by the signal guns of the Marshfield men from a neighboring hill. Yet though the regulars got safely away, they left behind them the three hundred muskets with which the Tory militia had drilled, and which presently formed a part of the equipment of the Whigs before Boston. That equipment, while most irregular, was not to be despised. By the 22d a strong army covered all land approach to Gage, who began to consider himself between two fires.

"The regulars encamped," says one British account of the Concord expedition, "on a place called Bunker's Hill."<sup>1</sup> There, under

<sup>1</sup> "Memorial History of Boston," iii, 15.

the guns of the fleet, the tired troops found safety; and there, for all that any one can see, it would have been wise of Gage to leave them. With Bunker Hill at his command, and with Dorchester Heights once occupied by his forces, Boston would be safe from all attack by the Americans — and not till then.

But on the next morning Gage withdrew the troops to Boston. As a matter of fact, he doubted his own strength, and greatly exaggerated the power of the rebels, since his first sensation was a dread lest the town should rise at his back, and his army be destroyed. Of this there was no real chance at any time. Yet he drew in his men in order to make himself secure, and began with the selectmen negotiations looking to his safety.

There were many in the town who were eager to leave it, and many outside anxious to come in. The governor made the rule that for the purpose of taking out family effects but thirty wagons might enter the town at a time. The ruling drew from Warren the following very characteristic letter.

CAMBRIDGE, April 20, 1775.

SIR :— The unhappy situation into which this colony is thrown gives the greatest uneasiness to every man who regards the welfare of the empire, or feels for the distresses of his fellow-men : but even now much may be done to alleviate those misfortunes which cannot be entirely remedied ; and I think it of the utmost importance to us, that our conduct be such as that the contending parties may entirely rely upon the honor and integrity of each other for the punctual performance of any agreement that shall be made between them. Your Excellency, I believe, knows very well the part I have taken in public affairs : I ever scorned disguise. I think I have done my duty : some will think otherwise ; but be assured, sir, as far as my influence goes, everything which can reasonably be required of us to do shall be done, and everything promised shall be religiously performed. I should now be very glad to know from you, sir, how many days you desire may be allowed for such as desire to remove to Boston with their effects, and what time you will allow the people in Boston for their removal. When I have received that information, I will repair to congress, and hasten, as far as I am able, the issuing a proclamation. I beg leave to suggest,

that the condition of admitting only thirty wagons at a time into the town appears to me to be very inconvenient, and will prevent the good effects of a proclamation intended to be issued for encouraging all wagoners to assist in removing the effects from Boston with all possible speed. If Your Excellency will be pleased to take the matter into consideration, and favor me, as soon as may be, with an answer, it will lay me under a great obligation, as it so nearly concerns the welfare of my friends in Boston. I have many things which I wish to say to Your Excellency, and most sincerely wish that I had broken through the formalities which I thought due to your rank, and freely told you all I knew or thought of public affairs; and I must ever confess, whatever may be the event, that you generously gave me such opening, as I now think I ought to have embraced: but the true cause of my not doing it was the vileness and treachery of many persons around you, who, I supposed, had gained your entire confidence.

I am, &c.,

JOSEPH WARREN.

His Excellency General Gage.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Frothingham's "Warren," 467.



In striking contrast to the manly regret expressed by Warren in this letter is the scene enacted that afternoon at Cambridge, where the Committee of Safety met. Doctor Benjamin Church, one of the trusted leaders of the Whigs, an orator on the Massacre, and a pamphleteer, was a member of the committee, for which Warren had recently engaged Paul Revere as messenger. Revere writes, in the letter already quoted: "I was sitting with some, or near all that committee, in their room . . . in Cambridge. Dr. Church, all at once, started up. 'Dr. Warren,' said he, 'I am determined to go into Boston to-morrow.' (It set them all a-staring.) Dr. Warren replied: 'Are you serious, Dr. Church? They will hang you if they catch you in Boston.' He replied: 'I am serious, and am determined to go at all adventures.' After a considerable conversation, Dr. Warren said: 'If you are determined, let us make some business for you.' They agreed that he should go and get medicine for their and our wounded officers." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Revere's narrative.

Church was the first American traitor. Although possessed of all the Whig secrets, he had for some months, perhaps longer, been in communication with Gage. His journey to town was for the purpose of delivering information, and for some time yet he managed to carry on the double rôle. Nevertheless his information, put in the hands of Gage, did no harm. It throws but one more light upon the incompetence of the general that, with such information as Church now gave him, he blundered so continually.

We learn from John Andrews' letters of the agreement made between Gage and the town. "Yesterday," he writes on the 24th, "we had town meetings all day, and finally concluded to deliver up *all* our arms to the Selectmen, on condition that the Governor would open the avenues to the town." In this agreement the townspeople were advised by the Committee of Safety to join. Accordingly, there were delivered to the Selectmen, and lodged in Faneuil Hall, "1778 fire-arms, 634 pistols, 978 bayonets, and 38 blunder-

busses.”<sup>1</sup> These were marked with their owners’ names, and were later to be restored. As soon as this delivery of arms was effected, hundreds applied for passes to leave the town. Andrews must have reflected the feelings of many when he wrote, “If I can escape with the skin of my teeth, shall be glad.”

There were for a few days much hurry and bustle, both of egress and of ingress. At first as many as wished were allowed to go out, and the chief difficulty was one of transportation. It is to be supposed that for a while the admiral kept to his agreement to lend boats to the refugees. There was a very considerable exodus. “Near half the inhabitants,” wrote Andrews on May 6, “have left the town already, and another quarter, *at least*, have been waiting for a week past.” Andrews probably exaggerated, yet hundreds of the better class went out, and about five thousand of the poor. These latter were quartered among the different towns at public expense.

<sup>1</sup> Frothingham’s “Siege,” 95.

But the outflow from Boston was speedily checked. On the 6th Andrews was still in Boston, and making up his mind to stay on account of his property, but still anxious to secure a pass for his wife, whose personal fears — she was an æsthetic person, an amateur artist whose landscapes Lord Percy had admired — were greater than her interest in her husband's safety. She did safely get away, amid the miserable procession that her husband describes. "You'll see parents that are lucky enough to procure papers, with bundles in one hand and a string of children in another, wandering out of the town (with *only a sufferance of one day's permission*) not knowing where they'll go." Andrews' wife went out in a sailing vessel, but whether by land or by water she was one of the last to go.

This was because the Tories interfered in the general removal. It alarmed them to see so many leave: these Whigs, and especially those of good social position, were the best hostages for the safety of the town from assault. So they made vigorous expression of



their discontent, and to them Gage yielded. They had already formed military organizations for his support, and when they threatened to quit the town and seek refuge in Canada or London, the threat was too much for him. Restrictions were at once put upon the issuing of passes, and in a very short time the conditions imposed were so severe that it was practically impossible for people of the better class to leave the town. "There are but very few," wrote Abigail Adams, "who are permitted to come out in a day; they delay giving passes, make them wait from hour to hour, and their counsels are not two hours together alike. One day, they shall come out with their effects; the next day, merchandise is not effects. One day, their household furniture is to come out; the next, only wearing apparel; the next, Pharaoh's heart is hardened, and he refuseth to hearken to them, and will not let the people go."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless the poor were still welcome to depart, and from time to time were even sent out in

<sup>1</sup> "Familiar Letters of John and Abigail Adams," 54.

order to relieve Gage of the necessity of feeding them.<sup>1</sup>

During this period a number of Tories came to Boston. These were the families of men already in the town, or were others who felt that, though until the present their homes had been safe for them, the future was too doubtful. They hastened to put the British defences between them and the Whigs. Among them the most notable was Lady Frankland of Hopkinton, who once had been Agnes Surriage, the barefooted serving-maid of the tavern at Marblehead. She now was a widow of nearly fifty, and came down from Hopkinton only to be detained before the lines, and made the subject of memoranda and petitions. The lieutenant who detained her person was reprimanded, and by vote of the provincial congress she was permitted to enter Boston with "seven trunks; all the

<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant Barker makes a suggestion that must have been popular among the officers. "I wonder the G——l will allow any of their people to quit the Town till they return the Prisoners; one wou'd think he might get 'em if he'd try."

beds with the furniture to them; all the boxes and crates; a basket of chickens, and a bag of corn; two barrels and a hamper; two horses and two chaises, and all the articles in the chaise, excepting arms and ammunition; one phaeton; some tongues, ham, and veal; and sundry small bundles.”<sup>1</sup> Evidently thinking that Lady Frankland’s household was well enough supplied, the congress did not allow to pass her seven wethers and two pigs.

There were others who left their homes, though not to go to Boston. Of these Judge Curwen of Salem is a type. He was considered — unjustly, he protests — as a Tory, and finding his neighbors daily becoming “more and more soured and malevolent against moderate men,” he left Massachusetts. In this case it was the wife who remained behind, “her apprehensions of danger from an incensed soldiery, a people licentious and enthusiastically mad and broken loose from all the restraints of law and religion,

<sup>1</sup> “Memorial History of Boston,” iii, 77.

being less terrible to her than a short passage on the ocean.”<sup>1</sup> Curwen went to Philadelphia, but finding the situation the same, proceeded to London and there lived out the war. Many others, like him, repaired to the capital, and formed a miserable colony, living on hope, watching the news from home, pensioned or grudgingly maintained by the government, and sadly feeling themselves strangers in a strange land.

Without doubt the times were very hard for men who, like Judge Curwen, wished to take no side, but to live at peace with all men. Of such men there was a very large class, so large in fact that more than one Tory sympathizer has claimed that the Revolution was fought by a minority of the people of the colonies, who were so virulent as to force the moderates into their ranks from dread of personal consequences. Such a claim is weak upon its very face, and will not bear examination. Most of the moderates were but waiting to see how the cat would

<sup>1</sup> Curwen's "Journal," 25.



jump, and when once a preponderance of sentiment showed they speedily took sides. Had there been in the colonies a majority desirous of a return to allegiance, the Whig cause surely could not have survived the dark days of the war. We can safely conclude the majority to have been in favor of the rights of the colonies, always understanding that they desired nothing more than they had always had since the accession of George the Third. A man of such a type is clearly seen in John Andrews, with his occasional fits of depression and doubt, and his impatient exclamations against the radicals among the Whigs. Note, for instance, what he says on the death of William Molineux, one of the prominent Boston Whigs, whose death was a loss to the cause. "If he was too rash," remarked Andrews, "and drove matters to an imprudent pitch, it was owing to his natural temper; as when he was in business, he pursued it with the same impetuous zeal. His loss is not much regretted by the more prudent and judicious part of the community."

Yet though Andrews could thus express himself, he could again speak quite otherwise, as the remarks quoted in this book have already shown. He doubted at times, and was petulant against the fortune that brought him discomfort and loss, but in the main he was stanch. Andrews was, then, a type of the moderate who threw in his lot with his country. Judge Curwen, on the other hand, was one of the smaller class which, in doubt and despair, withdrew to the protection of the crown. Many of them were too old to fight; many had not the heart to lift their hands against their neighbors. Every country sees such men at every war. Often they may live peaceably, anguished with doubt, and distressed for humanity. But in a civil war there is seldom a refuge for them. It was certainly so at the Revolution. A very few among the Tories, venerated by their neighbors, might remain neutral; the remainder must take sides, or go. The fighting men felt that those who were not with them were against them, and among the stay-

at-home Whigs were plenty who were willing to express the feeling. Hence the reproaches and menaces which drove Judge Curwen from his home, and hence the doubtful looks in Philadelphia which made him "fearful whether, like Cain, I had not a discouraging mark upon me, or a strong feature of toryism." Curwen crossed the water, and other moderates slipped into Boston, to find themselves as unhappy within the town as they had been outside, in spite of the strength which Gage was slowly gaining.

This strength was, so far, purely defensive. Gage did not consider himself ready to take the offensive. Those Tories who came to town informed him of the numbers outside, and he saw very plainly the result of sending an expedition against a militia which would melt before the head of his column, only to attack it in flank and rear. So no action was considered, especially as the rebels offered, so far, nothing to strike at. Gage made himself as strong as he could, and waited reinforcements.

His strength was partly, as we have seen, in the organization of the Tories. Their men began at once to form themselves in companies, under the general leadership of Timothy Ruggles, who had long been a political tower of strength, and was now assuming military importance. The new volunteer companies were, as we have seen, of such value to Gage that they were able to make him break his promise to let the townspeople leave Boston. Yet so far as is known they did nothing more in the siege than to parade and mount guard.

Gage's chief attention was directed to fortifying. His situation was easily defensible at certain points, and of them he first made sure. At the south, across the passage to Roxbury, were the "lines" of which all contemporary accounts speak. These Gage strengthened until by the 4th of May Lieutenant Barker records that the works were almost ready for ten twenty-four-pounders. From the Neck the western line of the peninsula of Boston ran in a general northerly





PLAN OF THE SIEGE

direction for about a mile and a half; it then ran east for nearly a mile; then turning south, it finally swept inward to the Neck. The outline had three projections, each caused by a hill: Barton's Point at the northwest; Copp's Hill at the northeast; and Fort Hill on the middle of the eastern side. Each of these was fortified as soon as possible. The four points were Gage's main defences.

When these forts were finished, the town was by no means secure. The forts commanded most of the northerly and easterly sides, of which the war-ships commanded the remainder; but the whole western side of the town, along the Common and the foot of Beacon Hill, was open to attack. This was, roughly speaking, along the line of the present Charles Street, prolonged into Tremont Street. The Back Bay beyond this water-line was so shallow that no war-ship could anchor there; a night attack, delivered in boats, might surprise the soldiers on the Common in their barracks or their tents. In order to command the western shore,

and also to quell a possible rising in the town, Gage erected a "small work" on Beacon Hill. Later in the siege every one of these points was strengthened; a low hill, near the present Louisburg Square, was protected; and redoubts were thrown up to defend the shoreline of the Common. But the four main works, and the Beacon Hill fort, were all that Gage was able to accomplish before Bunker Hill battle. He managed, however, to put his army under strict military discipline, which before the 19th of April he had not imposed on them.

From letters and diaries we get glimpses of the situation of the troops. They were short of fresh provision, disgusted with their situation, and at times not a little alarmed. What other unexpected qualities the Yankees might show no one could predict. They were still, however, regarded as low in the scale of humanity. On the fifth of May Lieutenant Barker records the discovery of a "most shocking" plot. "It was a scheme to cut off all the officers of the Garrison.

Upon the 24th, the day we were to keep St. George's day, the Rebels were to make a feint Attack at night upon the Lines: a number of men were to be posted at the Lodgings of all the Officers, and upon the Alarm Guns firing they were to put the Officers to death as they were coming out of their houses to go to their Barracks. What a set of Villains must they be to think of such a thing! but there is nothing be it ever so bad that these people will stick at to gain their ends." The horrified lieutenant ascribes to this discovery the fact that Gage ordered the officers to sleep at barracks. It is, however, more likely that the general paid no attention to the tale, but thought it time for officers and men to be together.

Once more the army was shocked. A fire broke out near property owned by Hancock, and in putting out the blaze there was discovered a chest of bullets "in Hancock's store." The news spread rapidly, and was regarded as another proof of the desperate nature of the Whigs.



So the army, uncomfortable and uneasy, looked for its reinforcements, which before long began to come in. Troop-ships arrived, but the most welcome was the *Cerberus*, with the three major-generals. The relief of the garrison found expression in waggery; they called the generals the three bow-wows, and circulated the doggerel:—

“Behold the Cerberus the Atlantic plow,  
Her precious cargo Burgoyne, Clinton, Howe,  
Bow wow wow!”

Burgoyne at this time made a special nickname for himself. Hailing a ship as they entered the harbor, the generals learned that the army was shut up by the provincials. “What!” cried Burgoyne. “Ten thousand peasants keep five thousand king’s troops shut up! Well, let *us* get in, and we’ll soon find elbow-room!”<sup>1</sup> And Elbow-room was Burgoyne’s name for a long time thereafter.

Yet the three new generals for a while did nothing. Lieutenant Barker regretfully re-

<sup>1</sup> Current newspapers, quoted in Frothingham’s “Siege,” 114.

cords: "Tho' we have new Generals come out, yet they have brought no more authority than we had before, which was none at all." It is safe to assume that on learning the quality of the "peasants," Burgoyne was not anxious to attack them with an inferior force. The British therefore continued to await reinforcements.

From Burgoyne's voluminous correspondence we learn his state of mind. He had come to the country unwillingly: "I received your Majesty's commands for America with regret," he wrote in his letter to the king, and elsewhere records that the event was one of the most disagreeable in his life. Nevertheless, once enlisted in the campaign, he had thrown himself into it. Perceiving in advance how little, as junior major-general, he would have to do, he endeavored to have himself transferred to the post at New York, where he rightly perceived that there was much to be done. He was in favor of attempting conciliation. Had that post at this time been occupied by Burgoyne, his quick wit, true

sympathies with the Americans, and real abilities might have made for him a different name in the history of America. But his attempt failed, and now, almost inactive in his post at Boston, he was studying the situation, probing the weakness of Gage and learning the difficulties of his position. Gage had little money for secret service, it is true, and the provincials were stubborn foes whose true measure Burgoyne had not yet taken,<sup>1</sup> but he saw how poorly Gage had provided against the calamities which had come upon him. Burgoyne doubted the outcome, and fretted at the situation.

In the meanwhile the rebels had been working to make that situation worse. Their first need was to get some semblance of order among the troops. At the head of the Massachusetts army was Artemas Ward, a veteran of the French wars, no longer vigorous, and

<sup>1</sup> "There was hardly a leading man among the rebels, in council, or in the field, but at a proper time, and by proper management, might have been bought." — BURGoyNE to Lord Rochfort, June, 1775. Fonblanque's "Burgoyne," 149-150.

never used to independent command. He drew his authority from the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, which now hastily came together, and communicated with Ward chiefly through the Committee of Safety, of one of whose meetings we have already had a glimpse. The active head of the committee was Warren, who kept in close touch with Ward.

Organization proceeded slowly, complicated by the fact that the other provinces maintained separate armies. The names of some of the commanders are still familiar. Putnam and Spencer were the heads of the Connecticut troops; John Stark was prominent among the New Hampshire men; while to command the Rhode Islanders came Nathanael Greene. With praiseworthy suppression of provincial jealousies the commanders speedily agreed to subordinate themselves to Ward, as the oldest among them, and the head of the largest body of troops. He was regarded as commander-in-chief, and his orders were to be observed by all. Yet the



means to communicate orders and to receive reports were long lacking. The combined armies were far from being a unit, and if attacked could resist little better than on the 19th, as scattered bands, and not as a whole.

The very size of the army was uncertain. On paper there were more than twenty thousand men; as a matter of fact there can seldom have been more than four-fifths of that number. Of the actual total Massachusetts provided 11,500, Connecticut 2300, New Hampshire 1200, Rhode Island 1000.<sup>1</sup> Further, in its variable size this was the very type of a volunteer army, of which every man owned his equipment, clothed himself, and considered himself still, to a large extent, his own master. Of the thousands living within twenty-five miles of Boston, who sprang to arms on the 19th, knowing that if they were quick they might strike the British before night, few had the foresight to prepare themselves properly for the cam-

<sup>1</sup> Frothingham's "Siege," 101.

paign that was to follow. There were no commissary stores to supply them. Their affairs at home they left just where they stood. In the next few days many of these men went home, for the necessary arrangement of their affairs and for more clothing. The larger number of them returned to camp immediately, some were slower, and yet others stayed for a longer time. Even those who joined the army after more preparation often had business that called them home, in which case they considered it a hardship to be denied. The officers sympathized, especially when that business was haying. Cases occurred in which the men on furlough were making their officers' hay, while at the same time drawing the pay of the province. The position of the general commanding such troops was not to be envied.

Further, military supplies were very few. In spite of the preparations of the provincial congress, there were on hand only sixty-eight half-barrels of powder, a scanty stock with which to begin the siege of a military

## Boston Beleaguered



garrison. Of cannon a varying number is reported, few of them as yet of value, for lack of shot to fit them. It was doubtless a great relief to Ward that he was not called upon to use his cannon, since they would have drawn too heavily upon his scanty supply of ammunition, which could be replaced but slowly.

Altogether, the position of senior major-general was a difficult one. To knit into an army such a mass of units, to create supplies out of nothing, to organize a commissary and means of communication, and maintain a firm front over a line of ten miles, these were the needs of the situation. We need scarcely marvel that Ward, old and enfeebled, with his hands tied by uncertain authority, could not meet them. A genius was needed in his place, and the good fortune was that the genius eventually came. In the meanwhile Ward, pottering at his task, depended much on the initiative of his subordinates. The passage from the Neck to Roxbury was now guarded by Brigadier-General John Thomas

of Marshfield,<sup>1</sup> who to deceive the enemy as to his numbers occasionally marched his force of seven hundred round and round a hill. The ruse was successful, for Lieutenant Barker wrote that "at Roxbury there must be between 2 and 3000." Nevertheless, it is hard to believe that so important a post was long left so slightly guarded. Thomas exercised his men with equal profit in cutting down trees to obstruct the passage, and in throwing up earthworks. Of other entrenchments, at this stage, we hear little. Putnam wanted to fortify Prospect Hill, commanding the passage from Charlestown Neck, but could not get permission. Yet the whole country about Boston was dotted with low hills, on which might easily be made a chain of fortifications.

Besides such work as Thomas's, for a

<sup>1</sup> "And yet to-day, if you should ask ten Boston men, 'Who was Artemas Ward?' nine would say he was an amusing showman. If you asked 'Who was John Thomas?' nine would say he was a flunky commemorated by Thackeray."—E. E. HALE, "Memorial History of Boston," iii, 100.



month little was done. To be sure, early in May a party of provincials, gathered in Connecticut and Vermont, and headed by Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold, took Ticonderoga by surprise, and gained for America a fine supply of cannon. We shall later see what was done with this artillery, but there was no present means of transporting it to Boston, and no powder for its use, and so there was no profit to the country save in encouragement. Until the 21st of May nothing happened near Boston save small skirmishes, and brushes of outposts. Here and there a floating battery of the British warped up near land and fired a few shots, and occasionally a squad of riflemen did a little pot-hunting on its own account. These skirmishes, except as they accustomed the provincials to the smell of powder, had no effect on the situation, until at last the opposing sides found that they had something worth contending for.

Gage had in Boston no supply of fresh meat, but plenty of horses needing hay. It

occurred to him, finally, that the islands in the harbor were plentifully stocked with sheep and cattle, and besides grew plenty of grass. He sent, therefore, on the 21st of May, a party to bring hay from Grape Island, near Weymouth. The Americans took the alarm, soldiers were sent from the camp, the militia who were at home turned out, and much long-range shooting was indulged in. "It was impossible to reach them, for want of boats," wrote Abigail Adams, "but the sight of so many persons, and the firing at them, prevented their getting more than three tons of hay, though they carted much more down to the water. At last a lighter was mustered, and a sloop from Hingham, which had six port holes. Our men eagerly jumped on board, and put off for the island. As soon as they perceived it, they decamped. Our people landed upon the island, and in an instant set fire to the hay, which, with the barn, was soon consumed, — about eighty tons, it is said."

Emboldened by this success, the provincials began to take steps to remove from the

islands the whole stock of cattle, sheep, and hay. Though, on the 25th of May, the garrison of Boston was largely reinforced and ships were added to the squadron, the Americans began work boldly with the islands nearest at hand. Noddle's Island, now East Boston, stretched within easy cannon shot of the town; it was reached from Hog Island by means of a couple of fords, passable at low tide. In broad day, on the 27th, the Americans occupied the islands, and were promptly assailed by the British in a schooner and a sloop. The skirmish grew very obstinate, but the schooner was left by the fleet to fight it out by her own means and those of her smaller consort. As a result, when she ran aground she was seized, stripped, and burned. On this day the Americans drove off the stock on Hog Island, which, with their capture of the schooner, was considered a great achievement. Three days later the stock was driven from Noddle's Island: "a trifling property," says Lieutenant Barker, "which we have no connexion with." This non-

chalent dismissal of five hundred sheep and lambs <sup>1</sup> scarcely comes well from one who had recently recorded that his mess had "luckily got a Sheep." Within a week other large islands, which the army and the fleet might naturally have regarded as their own storehouses, were stripped of livestock and hay. By these means the Americans were made still more used to war, and according to contemporary accounts acted boldly, running considerable risks. The total of stock saved by this means was about twenty-two hundred, and the loss of life trifling.

But the time was coming for more serious work. Gage felt his courage rise with his strength, and with his major-generals to back him he planned action. But first he had to fulminate. Much irritation had been caused by mock proclamations mysteriously appearing on the walls of the residences of the new generals, and Gage now determined to issue one in earnest. He called Burgoyne to his aid, and the literary general drafted a master-

<sup>1</sup> Frothingham's "Siege," 110.



piece. It was published on the 12th of June.

Beginning "Whereas the infatuated multitudes," it proceeded in pompous style to the statement that the rebels were adding "insult to outrage," for "with a preposterous parade of military arrangement, they affected to hold the army besieged." Gage offered to pardon all who would lay down their arms, except Samuel Adams and John Hancock, "whose offences are of too flagitious a nature" for forgiveness.

The bombastic proclamation delighted the Tories, who hoped for results from it. But it deeply angered the Americans. "All the records of time," wrote Abigail Adams,<sup>1</sup> "cannot produce a blacker page. Satan, when driven from the regions of bliss, exhibited not more malice. Surely the father of lies is superseded." The provincial congress prepared a counter proclamation, which similarly offered amnesty to all on the other side, "excepting only . . . Thomas Gage, Samuel Graves, those counsellors who were

<sup>1</sup> Adams Letters, p. 64.

appointed by Mandamus and have not signified their resignation, Jonathan Sewall, Charles Paxton, Benjamin Hallowell,<sup>1</sup> and all the natives of America who went out with the British troops on the 19th of April." We get from this an interesting glimpse of those who most excited American resentment, but the proclamation was never issued. More exciting events occurred to prevent it.

Gage was planning to make himself secure in Boston. Even he could not fail to see that the heights of Charlestown and of Dorchester threatened his army. Now that his three major-generals had come, and that his reinforcements were arriving (the troopships, said Lieutenant Barker, were "continually dropping in"), he felt strong enough to take and hold the dangerous posts. His plan was first to seize Dorchester Heights, and for the action was set a date — the night of the eighteenth of June. But Gage's counsel

<sup>1</sup> Graves was the admiral, Sewall the attorney-general, and Paxton and Hallowell were commissioners of customs.

was never well kept. While Burgoyne complained that the British "are ignorant not only of what passes in Congress, but want spies for the hill half a mile off," the Americans were in no such embarrassment. They had spies at every corner, and — we may suppose — listeners at many a door. Gage had already arrested men supposed to have been signalling from steeples. We do not know how the news got through on this occasion; at any rate the Americans were informed as early as the 13th.<sup>1</sup>

The chiefs of the provincial army felt that they were called upon to act. In the seven weeks of the siege they had to some degree tested the mettle of their men, and now believed they could be depended on to keep together against an attack. The troops had, on one occasion, made an expedition to Charlestown, which lay practically deserted on its peninsula, as if conscious of the fate which was to overtake it. On the 13th of May, Putnam, to give his men confidence, marched

<sup>1</sup> Frothingham's "Siege," 116.

his command, some twenty-two hundred men, into the town, over Bunker and Breed's Hills, where some of them were soon to lay down their lives, along the water-front close by the British shipping, and out of the town once more. "It was," wrote Lieutenant Barker, "expected the Body at Charles Town wou'd have fired on the Somerset, at least it was wished for, as she had everything ready for Action, and must have destroyed great numbers of them, besides putting the Town in Ashes." But no powder was burned.

Now it was destined that Charlestown should smell powder enough. On learning the news of Gage's projected move, the Committee of Safety called for an accounting of the condition and supplies of the various regiments, advised an increase in the army, recommended that all persons go armed, even to church, and finally on the 15th of June took the decisive step of advising the seizure of Bunker Hill. "And as the particular situation of Dorchester Neck is unknown to this Committee, they advise that



the council of war take and pursue such steps respecting the same, as to them shall appear to be for the security of this colony.”

Thus inadequate was still the American military organization: Ward was too old and too weak to assume actual leadership, and we find two consultative bodies advising each other, with no responsible head. Up to this time the Massachusetts congress had hoped that the second Continental Congress, now in session in Philadelphia, would adopt the army as its own and send it a general; but so far no answer had come to their requests. Nevertheless, even with this deficient organization something was effected. A detachment was made up, consisting on paper of fifteen hundred men, but in fact of about twelve hundred. These were placed under the command of Colonel William Prescott of Pepperell, a veteran of Louisburg and an excellent soldier. Assembling on Cambridge Common on the night of the 16th, “after prayer by President Langdon, they marched to Bunker Hill.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Inscription in Cambridge.

## CHAPTER X

### THE BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL

THE strategy of Bunker Hill battle has been criticised as often as the battle has been described. We have already seen that the choice of Charlestown instead of Dorchester was owing to ignorance, on the part of the Committee of Safety, of the advantages of the latter. From Dorchester Heights the town could equally well have been threatened, the shipping more effectively annoyed, reinforcements more safely summoned, and retreat much better secured. Nevertheless, since at this stage the British might have taken any fortification, it is fortunate that the Americans chose as they did, and left Dorchester for a later attempt.

Prescott's party of twelve hundred marched in silence to Charlestown, and on the lower slope of Bunker Hill the men rested for some

time while the officers discussed the situation. On the ground were Prescott, Putnam, and "another general,"<sup>1</sup> with Colonel Richard Gridley, the chief engineer. Their discussion was as to the proper point to fortify.

The peninsula of Charlestown, as has already been said, stretched toward Boston from the northwest. The approach to it was by a narrow neck of land, on one side of which, the northeast, ran the Mystic River; while on the southwesterly side was an inlet from the Charles. The town, a settlement of several houses, was on the bulge of the peninsula nearest Boston; but along the Mystic rose a series of three hills, from the lowest at Morton's or Moulton's Point, to the highest at Bunker Hill. Morton's Hill was 35 feet high, Breed's, in the centre, was 75 feet, and Bunker's was 110. The question arose, should Bunker Hill be fortified, as in the orders, or Breed's, which was nearer Boston and the shipping?

Much time was spent in the discussion.

<sup>1</sup> Frothingham's "Siege," 123.

Bunker Hill was higher and the safer, and commanded most landing points; but Breed's Hill seemed better suited to the eager spirits of the officers. When at last Gridley reminded that time was passing, the question seems to have been decided by the urgency of the unknown general, and a redoubt was laid out by the engineer on the summit of Breed's Hill. In the bright moonlight Prescott at once set his men at work digging, endeavoring to raise a good protection before morning.

In this he was successful. His men were all farmers, used to the shovel and pick; the earth was soft and scarcely stony; and there was no interruption. Cheered from time to time by the cry of the sentry on the nearer ship, "All's Well!" they pushed on the work. When at daybreak the redoubt was seen, the British could scarcely believe their eyes, for a completed fort seemed to stand there.

And now was a chance for a display of military science on the part of Gage and his three major-generals. There stood the



little low redoubt, unflanked and unsupported by any other fortifications, easily cut off from its own line of relief or retreat. If now Gage had promptly seized the isthmus, drawn his ships up close, and dragged a battery to the top of Bunker Hill, the American force could very soon have been driven to surrender. Ruggles, the Tory brigadier, is known to have advised this, and there were some among the British leaders who urged it. The general feeling, however, seems to have been that it would be unmanly to catch the Americans in the trap which they had laid for themselves. In a hasty council of war it was decided to assault the redoubt in the good old British fashion of marching up to its face. Gage was in no hurry even for this. Contenting himself with ordering the shipping and the Boston batteries to fire upon the little fort, he gave the Americans every chance to complete their defences, while leaving the way open for reinforcements. In a leisurely way he set about preparing an expedition to cross Charlestown

ferry. The men were mustered, and equipped as for a march.

Howe was to take charge of the assault, and Burgoyne and Clinton to direct the Boston batteries. The fleet joined in the fire. From Copp's Hill, from Barton's Point, from five ships of war, and from a couple of floating batteries, such a storm of round-shot was poured upon the redoubt that its defenders were amazed, and on the death of a comrade were ready to stop work. But Prescott, coolly insisting — against the protest of a horrified chaplain — that the body be immediately buried, took his stand upon the parapet, and from there directed the finishing of the redoubt.

In this position he was seen from Boston. Gage, handing his field-glasses to a Tory who stood near him, asked if he recognized the rebel. The Tory was Willard of Lancaster, a mandamus councillor, who well knew Prescott's declared intention never to be taken alive.

"He is my brother-in-law," he replied.

"Will he fight?" asked Gage.

"I cannot answer for his men," said Willard; "but Prescott will fight you to the gates of hell!"<sup>1</sup>

At the redoubt one of Prescott's aids followed his example, and walking back and forth on the parapet the two gave courage to their men. These fell to and completed the work. The rampart was raised to a considerable height, platforms of earth or wood were made inside for the defenders, and at about eleven o'clock the men stacked their tools and were ready.

The redoubt, when thus finished, was roughly square, about "eight rods on the longest side," which had a single angle projecting toward the south. Running northwards from the northeast corner Prescott had made a breastwork of perhaps two hundred feet,<sup>2</sup> to prevent flanking. It stretched toward the Mystic River, but fell short by more than a hundred yards.

<sup>1</sup> Frothingham's "Siege," 126, and Sabine's "Loyalists," 707.

<sup>2</sup> Reports vary from eighty to three hundred feet.

Cooped up in this little fort, inadequately protected against flanking, with shot continually striking on the sides of the redoubt, Prescott's men waited. They had worked all night and most of the morning, had little food and water, saw as yet nothing of the relief that had been promised them, and could tell by the fever of activity visible in Boston's streets that the red coats soon would come against them. There is no wonder that when Putnam rode up and asked for the entrenching tools (proposing, with the best of military good sense, to make a supporting redoubt on Bunker Hill), many of Prescott's men were glad of the excuse to remove themselves from so dangerous a neighborhood. Of those who carried back the tools, few returned.

But Prescott's remainder was stanch. The men were already veterans, having endured the work and the cannonade. Waiting in the fort, some of them could appreciate the marvel of the scene: a great stretch of intermingled land and water, the shipping spread below, close at hand the town of Charlestown, and



across the narrow river the larger town of Boston, with its heights and house-tops already crowded by non-combatants, viewing the field that was prepared for the slaughter. It was all in bright and warm weather, under a cloudless sky. Since the world began, there had been few battle-fields so spectacularly laid out.

At last the bustle in Boston's streets produced results. From the wharves pushed out into the placid water the boats of the fleet, loaded to the gunwales with soldiers in full equipment. As they neared the Charlestown shore, the fire upon the redoubt was doubled, and under its cover the troops landed upon Moulton's Point. There Howe at first deployed them, but after inspecting the ground sent back for reinforcements. For the men in the redoubt there were two more hours of waiting.

Those two hours very nearly decided the fate of the struggle, for had Howe moved immediately to the assault there could have been no such resistance offered him as later

he met. Prescott decided to send to Cambridge for reinforcements; but such was the confusion that the messenger could get no horse, and had to walk the six miles to headquarters. There he was ill received, for Ward, who during the whole day did not leave his house, feared an attack on Cambridge, dreaded to deplete his supply of powder, and only upon repeated representations ordered a couple of regiments in support of Prescott. These regiments had to draw their powder and make up their cartridges, and arrived when the battle was just about to begin.

The student of this day finds it difficult to disentangle the varied accounts. Who was on the field and who was not, what part was taken by each, who was in command at this point and who there, and the total of men engaged, all either were or still are disputed points. It seems to be beyond doubt, however, that Prescott from the first was in command at the redoubt, and that Putnam assumed, and tried to execute, general oversight

of the field of contest outside the redoubt and beyond the breastwork.

While Howe's troops lunched quietly at Moulton's Point, the aspect of affairs for the Americans became brighter. Prescott, seeing that he must have better protection toward the Mystic River, ordered a detachment of Connecticut troops, under Captain Knowlton, and with them six field-pieces — which seem to have figured not at all in the result — to “go and oppose” the enemy. Avoiding a marshy spot of ground, Knowlton chose a position some two hundred yards to the rear of the redoubt and its breastwork. Here was a fence, the lower part of stone, the upper of rails. The men brought forward from the rear another rail fence, leaned it against the first, and wove in between the rails hay which they found recently cut upon the ground. This, the “rail fence” mentioned in all accounts of the battle, was their sole protection.

Now began slowly to come across the isthmus the first of the reinforcements that

strengthened the hands of the provincials. They came partly as individuals, of whom the most noted was Warren, who but the day before had been appointed general by the provincial congress. He came as a volunteer, knew his risk, and was prepared to die.

Curiously James Otis, it is said, was also among the defenders of the redoubt, coming, like Warren, as a volunteer. It was a strange fate which sent him safely home, to live, still wrecked in intellect and useless to his country, while Warren was to fall.

By this time a lively hail of shot and shell was falling on Charlestown Neck, and to cross it was a test of courage. Seth Pomeroy, brigadier-general, veteran of Louisburg, came on a borrowed horse, and, sending back the animal, crossed on foot. Others, alone, in groups, or in semi-military formation, followed him, to be directed by Putnam to the rail fence, which needed defenders. At last came one who needed no directions — Stark, at the head of his New Hampshire regiment. Although requested to hurry his men across



the Neck, Stark replied, "One fresh man in action is worth ten fatigued ones,"<sup>1</sup> and would not change his step. Marching down the slope of Bunker Hill, he quickly noted that between the rail fence and the water the beach was unguarded. "I saw there," he said afterward, "the way so plain that the enemy could not miss it."<sup>2</sup> Before the attack could begin, Stark's men threw up a rude breastwork of cobbles behind which they could find a little shelter. — And now at last the American defences were completed, just as the troops were in motion to attack them.

At this point Howe neglected a method of attack which would have made his victory immediate. The rail fence, and Stark's defence upon the beach, were open to attack from the river. We have seen that two floating batteries ("large flat boats," says Lieutenant Barker, "sides raised and musquet

<sup>1</sup> Dearborn's account of the battle, *Historical Magazine* for 1864.

<sup>2</sup> Bancroft, v, 612.

proof") were used to bombard the redoubt. These, like the shipping and the Boston batteries, did no good whatever. But placed in the Mystic in the proper position, they could have raked the rail fence. "Had these boats been with us," says our lieutenant, "... they would have taken a part of the Rebels entrenchment in flank, and in their retreat wou'd have cut off numbers." But Howe was only a soldier, such an aid apparently never occurred to him, and the floating batteries — gondolas, as they were called — remained on the southern side of the peninsula. He ordered the attack.

The attack was triple, but the artillery fire, on which Howe had counted, was at first valueless, because for the six-pounders had been sent over mostly nine-pound shot, thanks to the chief of artillery, who was afterward supposed to be making love to the school-master's daughter. The cannon, further, got into the marshy ground, and could not find an effective position. So the real assault was first delivered by the troops alone, one de-

tachment marching against the redoubt, and one against the rail fence.

The troops moved with great confidence. According to the habit of the time, they were completely equipped as for an expedition, with blankets and three-days' rations. It has been computed that each soldier carried about a hundred and twenty pounds.<sup>1</sup> They were, therefore, greatly burdened at best; and on so hot a day, with the grass to their knees, and many fences to cross, their task was the worse. But they advanced with great composure, and apparently forgetting the 19th of April they were deployed in open order, as if to present each marksman with a separate target. Howe led those who marched at the rail fence, and General Pigot led the assault upon the redoubt. Both bodies of the regulars advanced with occasional ineffective volleys.

At first, says tradition, a few Americans fired when the troops came in range, but

<sup>1</sup> Ross's "Life of Cornwallis," quoted in Fonblanque's "Burgoyne," 159.

Prescott and his officers, leaping upon the parapet of the redoubt, kicked up the muzzles of the guns. If the men would but obey him, Prescott told them, not a British soldier would get within the redoubt. At the rail fence the men were likewise prevented from firing, Putnam threatening to cut down any who disobeyed. They were ordered not to shoot until the regulars passed a stake which Stark set up for a mark. Many familiar sayings were passed among the provincials: "Wait till you see the whites of their eyes! Aim at the crossing of the belts! Pick out the handsome coats!"

As if to add to the impressiveness of the scene, it was about this time that Charlestown, set on fire a little while before, that it should not give cover to the Americans, and that the smoke should confuse the rebels, burst into general conflagration. The town had been for weeks almost deserted, in dread of this fate; now at the command of Howe red-hot shot were thrown in among the houses, and marines landed from the ships and fired



the wharves and waterside buildings. The act was, however, a wanton one, for no advantage was gained or lost to either side by the fire.<sup>1</sup>

At last the troops were near enough.

<sup>1</sup> The picturesqueness of this scene has been remarked by many writers. The best contemporary description is, of course, Burgoyne's. "To consider this action as a soldier, it comprised, though in a small compass, almost every branch of military duty and curiosity. Troops landed in the face of an enemy; a fine disposition; a march sustained by a powerful cannonade by moving field artillery, fixed batteries, floating batteries, and broadsides of ships at anchor, all operating separately and well disposed; a deployment from the march to form for the attack of the entrenchments and redoubt; a vigorous defence; a storm with bayonets; a large and fine town set on fire by shells. Whole streets of houses, ships upon the stocks, a number of churches, all sending up volumes of smoke and flame, or falling together in ruins, were capital objects. A prospect of the neighboring hills, the steeples of Boston, and the masts of such ships as were unemployed in the harbor, all crowded with spectators, friends and foes alike in anxious suspense, made a background to the piece; and the whole together composed a representation of war that I think the imagination of Lebrun never reached." — FONBLANQUE, "Burgoyne," 156.

They had themselves been firing for some time, volleying as they advanced, but firing too high. Now, as they reached a line some eight or ten rods from the redoubt, Prescott gave the word to fire, and to continue firing. The discharge from the redoubt was close, deadly, and incessant, while at the rail fence the reception of the British was even more fatal. For a few minutes the regulars held their ground, returning the fire as best they might, yet decimated by the American bullets, and seeing their officers falling all about them. There was no hope to advance, and sullenly they withdrew.

If ever there was a moment that marked the fate of our nation, it was that one. It forecast Bennington, Saratoga, and Yorktown, Gettysburg and the Wilderness. Well might the provincials exult as they saw the retreat of the regulars; and well might Washington exclaim, when he learned that the farmers had driven the British, "Then the liberties of the country are safe!"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lodge's "Washington," i, 133.

But the battle was not yet won. The slaughter among the officers was frightful, yet the leaders were uninjured. Howe gave the order, the troops formed again, and again advanced to the attack. The Americans admired them as they approached, preserving unbroken order, and stepping over the bodies of the slain as if they had been logs of wood. This time the troops were allowed to come nearer yet, but when the provincials fired at the word the carnage was greater than before. In the smoke the officers were seen urging their men, striking them with their sword hilts, and even pricking them with the points. But it was in vain. The officers themselves were shot down in unheard-of proportion, and at the rail fence those who survived out of full companies of thirty-nine were in some cases only three, or four, or five. Nothing could be done under such a fire. Leaving their dead within a few yards of the American lines, for a second time the British retreated.

At last Howe had learned his lesson. While

his officers, for the sake of the men, implored him to find some other way to conquer the redoubt, he determined on a third assault. He ordered that the knapsacks be left behind, and that the troops be formed in column. In the work of rallying the disheartened men he was ably helped by Clinton, who, observing a detachment in disorder near their boats, impetuously hurried across the river, reformed their ranks, and put himself at their head. Some four hundred marines came over as reinforcements; according to Lieutenant Barker, the 47th regiment came also. Howe disposed his forces in three columns, to attack the three faces of the redoubt.

Between the first and second assaults there had been less than half an hour's interval. This time the wait was longer, and the Americans ineffectually sought to take advantage of it. Messengers were again sent to Ward; the general, learning at last that so many of the British forces were occupied in the battle that Cambridge was safe from



an attack, gave orders that more regiments should go to Prescott's assistance. To save the day there was yet time, but of the regiments thus ordered, few companies reached the ground, and fewer still took part in the action. And in this the weakness of the American organization was sadly evident. From first to last Ward seems to have sent to Bunker Hill sufficient force to have won the battle; but as he never left his house he could take no pains to make sure that his orders were obeyed. As a matter of fact, of the regiments despatched, one went to Lechmere's Point, where it must have secured an excellent view of the battle, but was completely useless. Being next ordered "to the hill," it was conducted by its colonel, James Scammans, to Cobble Hill; thence he sent to Bunker Hill to learn if he was wanted. Receiving a vigorous reply from Putnam, Scammans at last marched his men to Bunker Hill, reaching the top in time to witness the end of the battle. In similar fashion young Major Gridley of the artillery battalion,

whom "parental partiality" had given too much responsibility, took post at a distance, and fired at the shipping. Both Scammans and Gridley were later court-martialled. Other officers lost their way, or, like Colonel Mansfield, who stayed with his regiment to "support" Gridley in his position of safety, disobeyed orders.

These facts serve to show not only the confusion of the day, but also the bad judgment, to use no stronger phrase, of unseasoned soldiers. It is fair to say that the hesitancy of some was offset by the heroism of others. When Colonel Gerrish, who was later cashiered, could bring his men no further forward than Bunker Hill, his adjutant, Christian Febiger, a Dane, led a part of the command to the rail fence, and fought bravely there. One of the captains of artillery, disregarding Gridley's commands, took his two guns to Charlestown, and served one of them at the rail fence. Other individuals named and unnamed, with or without orders, went to the field, took post where they could,

and fought for their own hand. Yet these are scattered instances in the midst of too many failures to obey. Those who did march down to the field of carnage, with "no more thought," as one of them confessed, "of ever rising the hill again than I had of ascending to Heaven, as Elijah did, soul and body together," — those who thus devoted themselves left many behind on the safe side of Bunker Hill, or posted ineffectively behind distant fences or trees. Of the thousand Americans who during this last pause in the battle might have reached the post of danger, not enough arrived to affect the result.

At last, while aides were still beating up for more support, and Putnam himself was returning from a similar errand, Howe put his troops in motion. This time the movement against the rail fence was but a feint; and now for the first time the artillery of either side did effective service in the battle. Against the protest of the artillery officers that the ground was too soft to take better

position, Howe ordered them forward, and they loyally obeyed. They found a post from which they could enfilade the breastwork, and at their first discharge of grape sent its defenders into the redoubt for safety. It was the beginning of the end. Prescott, as he saw the breastwork abandoned, and marked the three advancing columns, saw that the redoubt was doomed.

And yet the day ought not to have been lost. Had Ward but sent a hundred pounds of powder, the fight might have been won. But Prescott looked for it in vain. Or had those men, whom he saw shooting at long range from positions of safety, come forward to reinforce the defenders of the redoubt, the scales might have been turned. But the fight was to end as it had begun, with Prescott's small detachment still unsupported, left all day without food or water, and now at the end without powder. As the troops climbed the hill a few artillery cartridges were opened and their powder distributed among the provincials. Some of the men



thus had three or four charges to their guns, some had only one; besides this, there were few bayonets among them. The wonder is that the men awaited the assault.

This time the regulars came within twenty yards of the redoubt before the word was given to fire. The heads of the columns were swept away, but the rest came on, and mounted the parapet. The first who topped it were shot down, among them Pitcairn. But then the American powder was spent, and from three sides the British swarmed into the redoubt. Reluctantly Prescott gave his men the word to retreat.

For a few moments the fighting was fierce. Some of the provincials were unwilling to run, and fought till they were killed. Some used stones, and some their clubbed muskets, retiring unwillingly. It might be supposed that the slaughter was great. But the British, for the very reason that they had entered from three sides, were afraid to fire on the farmers for the sake of their own men; the dust rose up in clouds, and so in the confusion most

of the defenders escaped, like Peter Brown, who wrote his mother: "I was not suffered to be touched, although I was in the front when the enemy came in, and jumped over the walls, and ran half a mile, where balls flew like hailstones, and cannon roared like thunder."<sup>1</sup>

Prescott came off unhurt. Those who saw him said that he "stepped long, with his sword up." He saved his life by parrying the bayonets which were thrust at him, although some of them pierced his clothes.

That more were not killed in the pursuit was due to two factors. The first was the exhaustion of the soldiers, who, tired with carrying heavy loads in the unwonted heat (and an American summer is like the tropics to an Englishman), were winded with their last charge up the hill. They were therefore in no good condition to follow up their victory, and the fugitives were soon away beyond Bunker Hill. Yet that the pursuit was so poor was due partly to the

<sup>1</sup> Appendix to Frothingham's "Siege," 393.

defenders of the rail fence. These men, more like veteran regiments than fragments of many commands, withdrew in a body, continually threatening those who offered to close in from behind. The end of the fight was as honorable to them as its beginning.

But there was much loss. A number were killed in the redoubt, and the slopes of Bunker Hill were dotted with slain, killed by bullets and cannon shot. At the Neck some few more were killed. The total of dead, according to Ward's record, was 115, of the wounded 305, of the captured 30. Slightly varying totals are reported.<sup>1</sup>

The great personal loss on the part of the Americans was in the death of Warren. There had been no need of his coming, and his value for higher services — he was president of the provincial congress and had just been appointed a major-general — was greater than at the post of actual conflict.

<sup>1</sup> Washington reported later 139 killed, 36 missing, 278 wounded.

But his fiery spirit, of which we have seen so much, would not be denied. That day he waked with a headache, but on learning of the expected battle he declared himself well. Friends tried to detain him, but he replied with the Latin phrase, "It is sweet and becoming to die for one's country." On reaching the field he met Putnam, who offered to take his orders. But Warren had come as a volunteer, and asked where he should go. Putnam showed him the redoubt, saying, "There you will be covered."

"Don't think," said Warren, "that I come to seek a place of safety; but tell me where the onset will be most furious."

Putnam still sent him to the redoubt. "That is the enemy's object."

Warren went to the redoubt, where the men received him with cheers, and Prescott offered him command. But Warren still declined, took a musket, and fought with the men. There is no doubt that part of the credit of the stout defence belongs to him. When the retreat was ordered he withdrew



unwillingly, and was among the last to leave the redoubt. After he had gone but a little way in the open field he was shot in the head, and died instantly. Once, when the British questioned the courage of the Americans, he had said, "By Heavens, I hope I shall die up to my knees in blood!" He had had his wish.

Warren's death at the time was not certainly known to either friend or foe; his body was buried on the field, and was disinterred and identified only after the evacuation. Of the Boston leaders, he was the only one who gave his life for the cause. He was sadly missed, a man of keen intellect and excellent political sense, of deep sympathies, and high honor. A magnetic leader, he could ill be spared.

The last figure on the battle-field was Putnam's. At the unfinished fortification on Bunker Hill he implored the fugitives to rally and "give them one shot more." The profanity which he used on this occasion he afterwards penitently acknowledged in church.

He retired only when the pursuers were close behind, but went no further than Prospect Hill. There, seizing on the chance which so long had been denied him, without orders he collected men and commenced another redoubt. The next day he was found there, unwashed, still digging, and ready for another battle.

Prescott returned to Cambridge, reported at headquarters, and offered if given sufficient troops to retake the hill. But Ward was afraid of his own position, and would not sanction the attempt.

The British loss was very heavy, about one thousand and fifty, of whom a quarter were killed, while ninety-two among the dead were officers. Pitcairn was carried to Boston, and died there. Colonel Abercrombie was killed, and many others of lesser note. As soon as it was possible the wounded officers were conveyed to Boston for medical attendance, and we have in Major Clarke's narrative a dismal picture of one sad procession. "In the first carriage was Major Will-

iams, bleeding and dying, and three dead captains of the fifty-second regiment. In the second, four dead officers; then another with wounded officers."

The Americans, at first discouraged by their defeat, in the course of time came to regard it as a victory. This it certainly was not, yet it had all the moral effect of a British defeat. The regulars learned that the provincials would stand up to them. "Damn the rebels," was the current phrase; "they would not flinch."<sup>1</sup> Many of the officers felt called upon to explain, in letters home, the reason for the defeat. The American rifles, argued one, were "peculiarly adapted to take off the officers of a whole line as it advances to an attack." They reasoned that the redoubt, whose perfection when examined was astonishing, must have been the work of days. As to the comparative uselessness of the British cannon, it was explained by the nine-pound shot (some say twelve) sent for the six-pounders. Said one newspaper: "It

<sup>1</sup> Moore's "Diary of the Revolution," 110.

naturally required a great while to ram down such disproportioned shot; nor did they, when discharged, fly with that velocity and true direction they would have done, had they been better suited to the size of the cannon.”<sup>1</sup>

But aside from a few such absurdities, the body of the army and the British public recognized at last that they had formidable antagonists. This was no such fight as that on the 19th of April, when the shifting provincials gave the regulars nothing to strike at. This was a pitched battle, and the farmers had all but won it. The British were amazed by the stubborn defence, and the rapidity and accuracy of the American fire. The proportion of killed among the officers was greater than any before known, and veterans admitted that the slaughter was worse than at Minden, the deadliest of recent European battles. It is with reason, then, that Boston still celebrates Bunker Hill. It

<sup>1</sup> These two quotations are from Frothingham's "Siege."



was the first signal proof of American courage, and forecast the success of the siege. Indeed, it is not too much to say that Bunker Hill battle had influence in deciding the outcome of the war. Howe, destined to be the leader of the British forces, never forgot the lesson of the redoubt on Breed's Hill, or of the flimsy fence of rails and hay. It was seldom that he could resolve to send his men against a rebel entrenchment.

## CHAPTER XI

### WASHINGTON TAKES COMMAND

THE immediate effect of the battle of Bunker Hill upon the American army — or rather armies — was one of dismay. The result was confusion. In fact, no study of the battle can fail to impress the examiner with the belief that outside the redoubt the whole conduct of the Americans was haphazard. Except for Stark's regiment, which itself came on in detachments, the reinforcements dribbled to the field in companies, platoons, or squads. They placed themselves where the hasty judgment of Putnam directed them, or if he was absent to beat up for more troops, chose their own positions and fought under their own officers. Putnam gave orders, yet was not always obeyed; and sent urgently for reinforcements, but, though his demands were received by

officers from other colonies, got no response.<sup>1</sup> In this individual character of the fighting the day was much like that of the 19th of April.

And after the battle conditions were much the same. Putnam commenced independently to fortify Prospect Hill. On Winter Hill the New Hampshire troops made a redoubt, and at Roxbury General Thomas hastily strengthened his position. Even at Cambridge Ward began to fortify. Word had been sent out to summon the militia, and as on the 19th of April these responded with alacrity and in great numbers. It was hourly expected that the British would sally from Boston, and the provincials kept themselves in a confused readiness. In the meantime the British cannon played steadily on the American fortifications, and the thunder of the artillery spread apprehension in the

<sup>1</sup>One Massachusetts colonel, who had urgently applied to Ward for permission to go to the Hill, but was refused, three times ignored the order of Putnam to come to his assistance—Putnam being from Connecticut. See Frothingham's "Siege," 168, note.

neighboring country. Abigail Adams wrote from Braintree: "The battle began upon our intrenchments upon Bunker's Hill, Saturday morning about three o'clock, and has not ceased yet, and it is now three o'clock Sabbath afternoon. It is expected they will come out over the Neck to-night, and a dreadful battle must ensue."<sup>1</sup> Yet the British did not come out, quiet gradually fell on the two armies, the militia returned to their homes, and the conduct of the siege entered on a new phase.

Now more than ever the Americans recognized that conditions were precarious, and that the greatest need was for a better organization. Zeal was not wanting. Whenever the British cannonade recommenced, whenever there were rumors of an attack, the troops were ready for a fight. But means of communication, and prompt and efficient subordination, still were lacking. Nor does it appear that those on the ground were able, handicapped as they were by orders from the

<sup>1</sup> Adams Letters, 67.



different provincial assemblies, to produce the necessary system. Higher political and military authority both were needed before the army could be efficient. Very fortunately events had been preparing to supply them.

Since the middle of May the second Continental Congress had been sitting in Philadelphia. Among the Massachusetts delegates were Hancock and the two Adamses. Gage on the 12th of June had consigned Samuel Adams and Hancock to the gallows, but Hancock was serving as president of the Congress, while the Adamses were important members of committees. They watched and waited for the growth of a sentiment which should support New England in its resistance.

The position of the Congress was without precedent. An illegal body, its delegates were elected by conventions improperly constituted. It had no authority to raise money, to purchase arms, or to direct the actions of the provinces. Though in New England war was in progress, many of the delegates loved the old order of things, and were not yet

ready to move toward independence. The first actions of the Congress were for conciliation.

There were those who saw that this was impossible. Of the New England delegates, very few ever again hoped for what was called "an accommodation." Washington, on his part, saw clearly that the end of the old order had come. Franklin knew that independence would be the result of the changes then in progress. Yet these men, and others like them, knew also that they could not hurry the Congress into radical action, and waited the effect of time. For weeks the Congress discussed and argued, and finally passed a resolve that "an humble and dutiful petition be presented to his majesty."<sup>1</sup> This would give a chance for feelings to cool, and for the supporters of the king to work for his interest.

But events would not stand still. In England the news of Concord had not moved the king to lenity; he saw no lesson in the tragedy,

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft, iv, 583.

and insisted on pressing his policy. Lord North's feeble endeavor to resign was checked, supplies were sent to Virginia to support the governor in his project of a rising of the slaves, a scheme was pressed to raise in Carolina a regiment of veteran Highlanders, and orders were sent to rouse the Iroquois against the rebels. Further, the king planned to strengthen his forces by hiring troops from the continent of Europe.

News of all this, coming across the Atlantic, by degrees changed the aspect of affairs, and made the members of the Congress doubtful of reconciliation. They began to look to their own positions, and to feel that, as Franklin said, unless they hung together they would all hang separately. To remind them what they could do in self-defence the needs of the army around Boston were frequently brought to their attention. Its discipline, equipment, and leadership were poor. At last came a petition from Massachusetts, begging that Congress should "take command of the army by appointing a generalis-

simo.”<sup>1</sup> Such a step was open and complete rebellion, and the Congress hesitated. By private letters to Samuel Adams the desired leader was pointed out: Washington.

The choice was doubly wise. To the Adamses it had been plain that, though Hancock was desirous of the post, it should not be given to a New Englander. The New England army would be knit together, and its provincial jealousies appeased, by the appointment of a general from another section. Further, in all the continent there was not another man of Washington's experience, ability, and steadfastness.

Washington was then in the prime of life, forty-three years of age, and of such physique as was needed for the bearer of the greatest burden that had ever been put upon an American. He was tall, finely built, majestic in carriage and impressive of feature, and accustomed from his youth to exposure, hardship, and constant exertion. He had long been used to depending upon himself,

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft, iv, 590.



and had acquired an independent judgment that was almost unerring. Further, that judgment had been exercised on military matters. While Hancock had been at best the captain of a militia company in time of peace, Washington had from his nineteenth year been commissioned with higher commands, and had seen much active service. More than one campaign owed its success against the Indians largely to him, and it was he and his Virginians who saved the remnant at Braddock's defeat. He had a strong temper under almost perfect control, patience and persistence in equal amounts, and, with a wonderful reserve, the quality of winning the confidence of all honest men.

Besides all this, he was heart and soul in the cause. While others had discussed and hesitated, he had long ago made up his mind, not only that the quarrel with the king would come to violence, but that all Americans should resist to the utmost. "Shall we," he asked in a letter to a friend, after enumerating Gage's despotic acts, "shall we after this

whine and cry for relief, when we have already tried it in vain? Or shall we supinely sit and see one province after another fall a sacrifice to despotism?" In a letter to a British officer at Boston, he says, "Permit me with the freedom of a friend (for you know I always esteemed you), to express my sorrow that fortune should place you in a service that must fix curses to the latest posterity upon the contrivers, and, if success (which, by the by, is impossible) accompanies it, execrations upon all those who have been instrumental in the execution. . . . Give me leave to add as my opinion that more blood will be spilled on this occasion, if the ministry are determined to push matters to extremity, than history has ever yet furnished instances of in the annals of North America, and such a vital wound will be given to the peace of this great country, as time itself cannot cure or eradicate the remembrance of." Few in those days had such certainty of the result of an outbreak, and few were so ready to participate in one. In the Vir-

ginia convention he said, "I will raise a thousand men, subsist them at my own expense, and march them to the relief of Boston." No wonder this was designated "the most eloquent speech that ever was made." He was not called on to make good his promise, but was sent to the two continental congresses. At the second it was noticed that he attended the sittings in his uniform of a Virginia colonel. Though he took no part in the debates, he made himself felt. Patrick Henry said of him at this time: "If you speak of solid information and sound judgment, Colonel Washington is unquestionably the greatest man on the floor."<sup>1</sup>

To make the Congress "adopt" the army at Boston, and to have Washington appointed generalissimo, became the task of John Adams, who at this time did the country perhaps his greatest service. There were objections to putting a Virginian at the head of New Englanders, for colonial jealousies, and even colonial lack of mutual understanding, might

<sup>1</sup> These quotations are from Lodge's "Washington," i.

bring about a fatal sullenness in the men. Adams discussed the matter in private with many delegates, and could not succeed even in making the Massachusetts and Virginia representatives agree. At last, determined to force action, one morning he announced to Samuel Adams that something must be done. "I am determined this morning to make a direct motion that Congress should adopt the army before Boston, and appoint Colonel Washington commander of it. Mr. Adams," he added in his diary, "seemed to think very seriously of it, but said nothing."

Alone, then, but determinedly following his inspiration, John Adams laid before the Congress his proposal. First he spoke in favor of accepting the New England army as the army of the continent; then he began a eulogy of Washington. Hancock's eyes flashed with resentment, and Washington himself slipped from the room. There were a few days of delay and debate, but the energy of Adams carried his proposals. The Congress adopted the army, appointed four



major-generals and eight brigadiers, and finally, on the 15th of June, chose the commander-in-chief. On the 17th of June, the day of Bunker Hill, Adams wrote joyfully to his wife: "I can now inform you that the Congress have made choice of the modest and virtuous, the amiable, generous, and brave George Washington, Esquire, to be General of the American Army."<sup>1</sup>

This was a step which the Congress could not retrace. The colonies were now in rebellion, and the members, as they realized that the noose was preparing for their necks, voted the meagre sum of twenty-five thousand dollars to supply with powder the army which alone stood between them and a sudden taking off. Yet the significance of the act was not yet understood by the colonies at large, for a few days later the assembly of New York voted military escorts both to Washington and to the royalist governor, who happened to arrive on the same day.

Washington himself, however, knew better

<sup>1</sup> Adams Letters, 65.

than any man the consequence of the momentous step. He foresaw that the labor would be difficult and the struggle long. On the 16th of June he accepted his commission, but added: "Lest some unlucky event should happen, unfavorable to my reputation, I beg it to be remembered by every gentleman in the room, that I, this day, declare with the utmost sincerity, I do not think myself equal to the command I am honored with.

"As to pay, Sir, I beg leave to assure the Congress, that, as no pecuniary consideration could have tempted me to accept this arduous employment, at the expense of my domestic ease and happiness, I do not wish to make any profit from it. I will keep an exact account of my expenses. These, I doubt not, they will discharge; and that is all I desire."<sup>1</sup>

As soon as he could settle his affairs, Washington started for Boston. In New York he heard the news of Bunker Hill, and was cheered by it. He arrived on July 2 in

<sup>1</sup> Sparks, "Writings of Washington," iii, 1.

Watertown, where the Massachusetts congress was sitting, and received a congratulatory address. He then pressed on to Cambridge, which he reached on the same day. On the 3d, a year and a day before the Declaration of Independence, and according to tradition under the great elm still standing near Cambridge Common, he took command of the army.

The occasion was momentous, and was so appreciated by a few at the time. Would the critical volunteer army approve of its new chief? There was not a murmur against him. From the first Washington's magnificent bearing and kingly self-confidence won the admiration of his men. He brought with him to the camp at Cambridge two who were ambitious to displace him, yet of Lee and Gates, both retired English officers, the first never won a personal following, and the second achieved but the meagre dignity of leadership of a cabal. From the moment when he took command of the army, Washington was, indeed, "first in the hearts of his countrymen."

And the student of our history cannot help remarking how providential it was that, almost at the outset of this struggle, Washington should come to the front. Eighty-six years later, at the beginning of the Rebellion, there was no accepted chief. Lincoln was doubted by the North, and the army had no true leader. By a slow process Lincoln's commanding strength became known; by an equally tedious sifting of the generals the qualities of Grant, Sherman, Thomas, and Meade were discovered. Only the tremendous resources of the North could have withstood the strain of such a delay. Had the same process been necessary at the outset of the Revolution, the colonies could scarcely have maintained the struggle. Had not Washington been at hand, accepted by the Congress and admired by the army, the virtual leader of both, the chances of success would have been slight. But he was Lincoln and Grant in one. Time and again, through the long years, it was Washington alone who brought victory from defeat. Without him







THE OLD NORTH BRIDGE

(The Americans marched to the attack from the further side.)



THE MINUTE MAN

By Daniel C. French

the colonies might have won their independence as the result of an almost interminable guerilla warfare; but with him the fight was definite, decisive, glorious, and — for the infant republic — mercifully short.

The army was now in the hands of a soldier, one who knew, if any man did, what was needed to make the raw militiaman into a professional. Washington fell at once to work. "There is great overturning in camp," wrote the Reverend William Emerson, he who had watched Concord Fight from the window of his study. "New lords, new laws. The Generals Washington and Lee are upon the lines every day. New orders from his Excellency are read to the respective regiments every morning after prayers. The strictest government is taking place, and great distinction is made between officers and soldiers. Every one is made to know his place and keep in<sup>7</sup> it. . . . Thousands are at work every day from four till eleven o'clock in the morning."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Writings of Washington," iii, 491.

This simple statement shows, in the wonder of the clergyman, not merely how much was now being done, but how little had been done before. As on the day of Bunker Hill, Ward had been a headquarters general, but Washington was "upon the lines." Many times later we find him exposing himself recklessly; now we see him constantly on active patrol of his outposts, supervising the new fortifications or the carrying out of the new regulations.

Apart from fortifying, which he drove early and late, his immediate difficulties were with the army organization, and these difficulties began immediately. He brought with him commissions for his major-generals and brigadiers, and the commissions of the former he bestowed at once. The fourth major-general was Putnam of Connecticut, who had had as his colleague Joseph Spencer, of the same colony. "General Spencer's disgust," wrote Washington on the 10th of July, "was so great at General Putnam's promotion, that he left the army without



visiting me, or making known his intention in any respect.”<sup>1</sup>

Upon this, Washington prudently withheld the other commissions, and proceeded cautiously, with regard to jealousies among the officers. By careful diplomacy he succeeded in retaining for the new establishment the services of most of the colonial brigadiers, for Spencer returned, and Thomas, who saw his juniors promoted over his head, agreed to take rank beneath them. Only one among the new appointees, Pomeroy, the veteran of Louisburg who had fought at the rail fence at Bunker Hill, declined his commission. He had marvelled that in the battle Warren should be taken and he, “old and useless,” be left unhurt. Now he withdrew from further service on account of his age; yet, going later upon a volunteer expedition, he died of exposure.

Before the jealousies of the higher officers were settled, Washington turned to the smaller fry. He now had to meet the nature of the

<sup>1</sup> “Writings of Washington,” iii, 23.

New England volunteer. "There is no such thing," he wrote before very long, "as getting officers of this stamp to carry orders into execution. . . . I have made a pretty good slam among such kind of officers as the Massachusetts government abounds in, having broke one colonel and two captains for cowardly behaviour in the action on Bunker Hill, two captains for drawing more pay and provision than they had men in their company, and one for being absent from his post when the enemy appeared and burnt a house close by it. . . . In short, I spare none, and yet fear it will not all do, as these people seem to be attentive to everything but their own interest."<sup>1</sup>

Washington was experiencing the difficulties which Lincoln was later to know, in dealing with the host of fair-weather soldiers and jobbing self-seekers who come to the front at the outset of a war. There was every reason why for some time he should estimate the New England character from what he

<sup>1</sup> Lodge's "Washington," i, 138.

saw of its worst side. Yet before the seven years of war were over he knew its better aspect. Massachusetts sent to the war nearly twice as many men as any other colony, and Connecticut was second. Measured by this standard, Washington's own colony came third in devotion to the cause.<sup>1</sup>

We know that later he acknowledged his appreciation of the devotion of New England to the cause and to his person. It is particularly interesting to learn that he reversed his judgment in one of the cases mentioned above. Among those cashiered for disobedience of orders and alleged cowardice at Bunker Hill was John Callender, captain of an artillery company. The trial went against him, and Washington dismissed him "from all further service in the continental service as an officer." Callender, determined to wipe off the stain on his honor, remained as a private in the artillery service, and found his opportunity at the battle of Long Island, where the captain and lieutenant of his

<sup>1</sup> Trevelyan's "Revolution," Part I, 378, footnote.

battery were shot. "He assumed the command, and, refusing to retreat, fought his pieces to the last. The bayonets of the soldiers were just upon him, when a British officer, admiring his chivalrous and desperate courage, interfered and saved him."<sup>1</sup> Washington ordered the record of Callender's sentence to be expunged from the orderly book, effected his exchange, and restored him his commission.

Yet in too many of the cases the sentence of incompetence or cowardice was just. Even when simple laxity of discipline was at the bottom of trouble, the effect was exasperating. Washington had much to teach the minor members of his army. That it was in all outward aspects a truly volunteer assemblage, we have the testimony of an eye witness. "It is very diverting," wrote the Reverend William Emerson, "to walk among the camps. They are as different in their

<sup>1</sup> See Frothingham's "Siege," and Appendix III of Vol. 3 of the "Writings of Washington." Both of these books quote Swett's "History of Bunker Hill Battle."



form as the owners are in their dress; and every tent is a portraiture of the temper and taste of the persons who encamp in it. Some are made of boards, and some of sailcloth. Some partly of one and partly of another. Again others are made of stone and turf, brick or brush. Some are thrown up in a hurry, others curiously wrought with doors and windows, done in wreaths and withes in the manner of a basket. Some are your proper tents and marquees, looking like the regular camp of the enemy. . . . However, I think this great variety is rather a beauty than a blemish in the army.”<sup>1</sup>

When we consider, however, that the men were dressed as variously as they were housed, and armed as from a museum of historical curiosities, we can easily see that the commander would not agree with the clergyman that such variety was to be admired. We find him advocating the purchase of uniforms. If nothing better can be had, he will be content with hunting-shirts, since a common

<sup>1</sup> “Writings of Washington,” iii, 491.

costume would have a "happy tendency to unite the men, and abolish those provincial distinctions, that lead to jealousy and dissatisfaction."<sup>1</sup> Washington strove also, but by the end of the siege was still unable, to provide for his men some form of regulation firearm.

He found, further, that the number of the troops had been overestimated. After waiting eight days for returns which he expected in an hour after his requisition, he found that, instead of the twenty thousand troops he had been led to hope for, he had but sixteen thousand effective men. With these he had to maintain a front of eight miles, against an enemy who could at will strike at any point.

In such a situation the only safeguard was fortification. Before Washington's arrival the redoubts on Prospect and Winter Hills had been completed, with scattered minor works. Washington at once began by strengthening these, and by finishing all uncompleted works. Then, in a manner char-

<sup>1</sup> "Writings of Washington," iii, 22.

acteristic of the whole siege, and which never failed to take the British by surprise, one August evening he sent a party to Plowed Hill, "within point blank shot of the enemy on Charlestown Neck. We worked the whole night incessantly one thousand two hundred men, and, before morning, got an intrenchment in such forwardness, as to bid defiance to their cannon."<sup>1</sup>

The British cannonaded for two days, but the Americans, finding to their disappointment that no assault was intended, finished the work at their ease. Similarly, as we shall see, Washington later took Lechmere's Point, commanding the river and the Back Bay. Before many weeks the works at Roxbury were made "amazing strong," and the rebels were in position to welcome an encounter. But there was no assault, and Washington had instead to meet the vexations of his office.

These were often trivial enough. A company would protest against the appointment

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, iii, 71.

of an officer unknown to them, a town would apply for special guard, a prisoner would demand the privilege of wearing his sword.<sup>1</sup> Washington met such requests with unvarying courtesy, but with firmness; even to the governor of Connecticut he refused troops for sea-coast protection.

One little correspondence throws a gleam of unconscious humor on the dull routine of Washington's correspondence. Hearing of hardships suffered in Boston by prisoners taken at Bunker Hill, Washington wrote to remonstrate. Gage returned answer two days later; its original is found in Burgoyne's letter book, "as wrote by me." It begins in the usual style of the literary general: "Sir, To the glory of civilized nations, humanity and war have been made almost compatible, and compassion to the subdued is become almost a general system. Britons, ever pre-eminent in mercy, have outgone

<sup>1</sup> Washington's correspondence with Major Christopher French is an interesting instance of the patience of a great man with the impatience of a small one.



common examples, and overlooked the criminal in the captive." Entering a general denial of Washington's charges, the letter goes on to bring counter-accusations, and finally, after giving valuable advice, the writers exhort Washington — of all men! — to "give free operation to truth."

Truly, as Burgoyne's biographer admits, there is something irresistibly ludicrous in the spectacle of such generals lecturing such a man. The sequel was honorable to the American chief. At first determined to retaliate upon some prisoners in his hands, he changed his mind, apparently because they, having been captured off Machias as their vessel neared land, had "committed no hostility against the people of this country."<sup>1</sup> The general therefore gave them

<sup>1</sup> The letters that passed between Washington and Gage, and later between him and Howe, are to be found in the volumes of his "Writings," and make interesting reading. Washington had at this time no prisoners in his hands other than those taken as described, because the prisoners of the 19th of April had been exchanged on the 6th of June.

the practical freedom of the town of Northampton.

One other correspondence caused about this time a flutter of excitement. Charles Lee was one of Washington's four major-generals, a man who had seen military service in many parts of Europe and America. He had served in the British army from 1747 until 1763, when, his regiment being disbanded, he served in Poland and Turkey, and finally, in 1772, came to America. Here he took up, almost violently, the cause of freedom, perhaps because of disappointment in the English service, perhaps because he foresaw opportunity. At any rate, he made himself conspicuous, and was generally regarded as the foremost military man in America, Washington alone excepted. Events proved that Lee acknowledged no superior, and impatiently desired to be rid of his chief. Washington was always on formal terms with his subordinate, no doubt because he read in his character, besides a certain ability, an unstable temperament and a

hasty judgment. When once Lee was at Cambridge he immediately rushed into a correspondence with Burgoyne, under whom he had served in Portugal thirteen years before.

The tone of his letter was highly literary. Lee reminded Burgoyne of their old friendship, and then, with many flourishes, went at his business. He lamented the infatuation of the times, when men of the stamp of Burgoyne and Howe could be seduced into an impious and nefarious service, and reminding Burgoyne of various bygone incidents, called to his mind his experience with the wickedness and treachery of the present court and cabinet. He spread himself at large on the principles of the present struggle, rejoiced that Burgoyne came by command of the king rather than his own desire, and warned him of the miscreants who had infatuated Gage. Then, explaining how his three years in America had acquainted him with facts, Lee begged Burgoyne to communicate the substance of the letter to Howe, who to his horror seemed to be becoming the

satrap of an Eastern despot. Protesting his devotion to America as the last asylum of liberty, Lee signed himself with the greatest sincerity and affection.

The letter was written before Bunker Hill, but not answered until the 8th of July. In his reply, Burgoyne hinted, with references to Locke, Charles the First, and James the Second, that he was equally well grounded in the principles of liberty. He urged Lee to lay his hand upon his heart, and say whether the Americans wanted freedom from taxation or independency. He, Burgoyne, with the army and fleet, and the king himself, was actuated only by the desire to maintain the laws. Then, having letters from England which were to be delivered into Lee's own hands, Burgoyne proposed a personal interview at the lines on Boston Neck, and sent the compliments of Howe, Clinton, and Percy.

It must be admitted that Burgoyne's purpose in this proposal was quite other than to deliver letters, or even to argue upon political differences. In a letter to Lord



North Burgoyne explained his real purpose in entering into correspondence with a rebel. In the proposed interview he would have cut Lee short in his paltry jargon, and pressed upon him the real facts in the case. Next he would have shown him the glory accruing to a successful mediator, and then, playing upon his pride, his interest, and his ambition, would have suggested a return to his allegiance. Burgoyne supposed that the reference to a mediator would have brought to Lee the memory of General Monk, and would have flattered him with the same intention to restore the state.

There is upon this plan of Burgoyne's but one comment to be made, and that has been clearly stated by his own biographer. "If an American General could have been found base enough to purchase his restoration to the favour of his late Sovereign by gross treachery to his adopted country, an English General should surely not have thought it worthy of his character and position to bribe him to such an act."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fonblanque's "Burgoyne."

Lee was not caught in the trap, though perhaps not owing to his own caution. Burgoyne's letter was laid before the Provincial Congress, which forbade the meeting. In a brief letter Lee explained that it was feared that the interview might create jealousies and suspicions. Burgoyne caught at this statement as showing, in the American staff, dissensions fruitful of future results; but the hope was never justified. Lee's future share in the siege faded into insignificance, and his damage to the American cause was not to come until later.

Washington may have supervised the correspondence and influenced its result. It affected him not at all, but in the midst of many such little affairs he found opportunity for really aggressive work. Once he was well fortified, the next step was to vex and disturb the enemy by cutting off supplies by sea, and making the approach to Boston difficult. For the latter purpose a detachment went boldly in broad daylight and burned the lighthouse at the harbor's mouth. Since

the first attempt was not satisfactory, the same men went again, and finished the job. Other little expeditions, carried on against either the harbor islands or the shipping near the town, were successfully undertaken. The men for such purposes were the fishermen of the sea-coast towns, thrown out of work by the fisheries bill, and burning with patriotic feeling.

Washington turned them to still better account in beginning a navy. To be sure, the little fleet which presently was busily at work was at first a spontaneous growth, for whenever a store-ship or king's sloop ran aground or made land at the wrong harbor, dories and fishing-vessels swarmed out to board it. Even before Washington's coming privateers were acting for the country, but with no better standing than pirates, for they sailed under no flag and bore neither commission nor letters of marque. The provinces of Connecticut and Rhode Island legalized the achievements of those who were busy in their waters, but for the adventurous spirits

who dared the men of war in Massachusetts Bay nothing was done until Washington found the way. Since, even though the need was imperative, he could not properly authorize the existence of a navy, we find him, on the second of September, wording a commission in the following manner: "You being appointed a captain in the army of the United Colonies of North America, are hereby directed to take command of a detachment of said army, and proceed on board the schooner *Hannah*, at Beverly." And thus the American Navy began its existence. Its vessels were few and small, being chiefly "converted" fishermen; its purpose was to intercept stores and gain information; and it was especially forbidden to engage with armed vessels, "though you may be equal in strength, or may have some small advantage." Before the end of the siege this little company of vessels was invaluable to Washington.

But in Washington's army lay his chief hopes — and also his chief difficulties. That whenever there was a chance for a fight the



men were very ardent, he was glad to acknowledge. But that when there was nothing to relieve the monotony of the camp they were indifferent to all discipline, he knew only too well. They were incorrigible traders of uniforms and equipment, sticklers for seniority upon but a few months' service, insistent for furloughs for return to labor on their own affairs, and troublesome even in demanding pay by lunar instead of calendar months. In order that their Yankee ingenuity might find less time to invent more trouble for him and for themselves, Washington very sensibly worked them hard at his fortifying, "Sundays not excepted."<sup>1</sup>

There were, however, difficulties which could be got over neither by work, nor by thought, nor by gradually licking an army into shape. Powder and arms both were lacking.

Powder was scarcely to be had anywhere. It was little made in the colonies, especially not in the neighborhood of Boston. Again

<sup>1</sup> "Writings of Washington," iii.

and again we find Washington writing for it, and occasionally reporting his exact situation. More than once the army had but nine rounds to a man. On the twenty-fourth of August Washington writes: "We have been in a terrible situation, occasioned by a mistake in a return; we reckoned upon three hundred quarter casks, and had but thirty-two barrels."<sup>1</sup> A few days later the situation was better, but still was bad enough, for he writes: "We have only one hundred and eighty-four barrels of powder in all (including the late supply from Philadelphia), which is not sufficient to give twenty-five musket cartridges to each man, and scarcely to serve the artillery in any brisk action one single day." He sent to Bermuda to seize a supply, but his vessels arrived too late. Supplies did slowly dribble in, and sometimes came in encouraging quantities when a store-ship was captured. But there never was plenty on hand, and too often not enough, for the powder would deteriorate in bad weather, as

<sup>1</sup> "Writings of Washington," iii.

was shown at a skirmish at Lechmere's Point. As the troops formed for duty, cartridge boxes were examined, "when the melancholy truth appeared."<sup>1</sup> Further, the men, from whom the lack of powder was concealed, were fond of amusing themselves by indiscriminate shooting. We find General Greene, in an order to his troops, threatening severe punishment to those who shot at geese passing over the camp. And so, with little acquisitions of powder, and steady depletion, Washington was never for a day properly supplied.

His difficulty in finding muskets, though never so great, was always considerable. The gunsmiths of Philadelphia, who had been expected speedily to equip his army, were not able to supply a satisfactory portion of the arms required, so that Washington was reduced to sending agents through the neighboring towns to buy guns. Their success was small. He tried also to buy the muskets of those men who, on the expiration of their term of service, went home. Here again the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

result was poor, for the men, mindful of the possibility of militia service, were very unwilling to part with their arms.

Yet the men had an ineradicable propensity to dicker among themselves. Arms and equipment changed hands in true Yankee fashion; even clothing was traded in, and the camp, when the men were off duty, must at times have been as busy as a market. Nothing better shows this than the diary of David How, whose brief entries prove him to be a true New Englander. Months later than Washington's first attempts to buy arms from the men, we find entries as follows.

"13 (January, 1776) I Bought a gun & Bayonet & Cateridge Box of Joseph Jackson and gave 42/6 Lawfull Money for the Whole. I have been Makeing Cateridges this Day. . . .

"20 I Bought a frock & Trousers of Parley Macingtyre and give 6 / Law.

"22 Peter Gage Staid Hear Last Night and I bought 3 Pare of Shoes of him @ 5 / 6 per pare

"23 I sold a pare of Shoes for 6 / 8.



"26 I Sold my Cateridge box For 4 / 6 Lawfull Money.

"16 March I sold my gun to Timothy Jackson for Three pound Lawfull Money."

We see in David How, even when soldiering, the qualities which later made him one of the richest men in Haverhill. The diary shows, also, what appears to be the visit to the camp of a shoe pedler. Modern disciplinarians would scarcely condone this, nor would they permit How's opportunity of making money when cooking for his company. For he writes :—

"24 day (January, 1776) I Cook this day & Bought 3 Barrels of Cyder for 9 / per Barrel.

"25 day I Bought 7 Bushels of Chesnuts & give 4 pisterens per bushel.

"30 We have Sold Nuts and Cyder Every Day This Week."

It was in the face of this well-nigh incorrigible tendency to make money out of the situation that Washington struggled to turn his militiamen into soldiers. We gather from his orderly books that he had difficulties with

disorders of many kinds, not the least of which were caused by the visits of "pretended suttlers"<sup>1</sup> who sold bad rum. To check drunkenness he licensed the sutlers and limited their activities, and for general discipline he worked steadily to show officers and men alike what was expected of them. And all the time he diligently tried to purchase weapons, though with so little success that at last he even took up the question of implements more primitive than muskets. There was in camp a company of Stockbridge Indians, who were so successful as to waylay a British sentry or two and kill them with arrows. Franklin, perhaps taking the hint from this, wrote to prove that the long-bow might be revived, but Washington would have none of it. Pikes, however, whose use in European warfare was fairly recent, he would consider. A number were ordered, and after them a second set of stronger make, the first being "ridiculously short and light."<sup>2</sup>

In October came to light the treason of

<sup>1</sup> Henshaw's "Orderly Book."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Dr. Benjamin Church. As already shown, he had for some time before the 19th of April been in communication with Gage. On the 22d, when he went into Boston with the knowledge of the Committee of Safety, he doubtless saw the general in person. An occurrence now showed that he was writing to the British commander, though his agency was not at first suspected. From Newport came a letter, brought by an American patriot to whom it had been given by a woman from Cambridge, who had requested to have it delivered to some officer of the British vessel stationed in the harbor. The American kept the letter, and, suspecting its purport, opened it. It was in cipher. This in itself was suspicious, and the letter was brought to Washington, who caused the woman to be arrested and questioned. At first she was obstinate, but finally she named Church as the writer of the letter. He in his turn was put under guard, but had had time to destroy any papers that might betray him. The letter when deciphered proved to

give little information besides the numbers of the American forces. From first to last Church had been of little value to Gage.

But the army and country, as Washington wrote, were "exceedingly irritated." Church was a man of pleasing address and ready language, and had stood high in Boston for years. He had written Whig pamphlets, had been an orator on the Massacre, and had served on many committees, notably the Committee of Safety. In consequence he had been given the highest office that a physician could look for, that of surgeon-general to the army. Resentment at his betrayal was extreme, and Abigail Adams was probably right when she wrote, "If he is set at liberty, even after he has received a severe punishment, I do not think he will be safe."

Church was not set free. As a member of the Massachusetts Congress he was brought before the House, and allowed to make his defence, which was elaborate and able. Church claimed that he was writing to his brother, and that his intentions were harm-



less; but he was not believed, and was expelled from the House. Later the Continental Congress adjudged him guilty, and ordered him confined in jail. Released later on account of his health, he was allowed to sail for the West Indies. His vessel was never again heard from.

This was Washington's foretaste of the treason of Arnold. It may have disturbed him deeply, but of that he gave no sign. So far as we can see, he dismissed the matter from his mind and went on with his work of providing a way for assaulting the town. Congress desired this, the country looked for it, and his own fiery nature urged him to the risk.

On the 11th of September, having previously notified his generals that he would lay the question before them, he had called a council of war, and proposed an attack upon Boston. They were unanimously against it. Now, in October, he again laid the matter before his council of war, and reached practically the same result, General Greene alone

thinking the scheme practical, "if ten thousand men could be landed at Boston."<sup>1</sup> If it is true that councils of war do not fight, the result was natural; but the situation was a very difficult one. The British had made Charlestown practically impregnable against anything except surprise, by a powerful redoubt on Bunker Hill. As for Boston itself, it was fortified at all prominent points, and was very strongly garrisoned by veteran troops. The Neck could not be forced, and to cross in boats over the Back Bay was a hazardous undertaking. It was common sense, therefore, to wait until ice should make it possible to assault the town at several points. With his wonderful patience Washington accepted the situation, and contented himself with wishing that the British would attack him. There were continual rumors that the British plan was laid, and deserters frequently came from Boston prophesying a sally; but still the regulars lay in their fastness, and did not move.

<sup>1</sup> Trevelyan's "Revolution," Part I.

## CHAPTER XII

EVENTS IN BOSTON FROM JUNE TO DECEMBER,  
1775

THE history of events in Boston after the battle of Bunker Hill is of a quite different tenor from that which we have just been considering. From the time when the wounded, and the more distinguished of the dead, were carried over from Charlestown on the evening of the seventeenth of June, the sober truth struck home, not yet to the Tories and the common run of officers, but to the generals. They were in a tight place, from which it would be difficult to escape with credit.

They might — and some of them did — reckon it out by common arithmetic. If it cost a thousand men to take a hill, and required another thousand to garrison it when taken, how much could the British army

master of the rolling country that lay before its eyes? Beyond the exit from either peninsula the next hill was already fortified, and the Americans prepared to "sell it at the same price."<sup>1</sup>

The British generals wrote very plainly in explaining the situation to their superiors at home. To be sure, Gage was a trifle disingenuous in reviewing the past. While admitting that the recent trials at arms proved the rebels "not the despicable rabble too many have supposed them to be," he ignored his original boast concerning lions and lambs. In stating that in all previous wars the Americans had never showed so much "conduct, attention, and perseverance," he admitted his ignorance of colonial history. But Gage was endeavoring to salve his smart and conceal his own shame.

Burgoyne, with nothing to palliate, wrote very frankly. "Look, my Lord," he said to the Secretary of State for the Colonies,

<sup>1</sup> This expression is ascribed to General Nathanael Greene.



June to December in Boston



"upon the country near Boston. It is all fortification." His mathematics has been already quoted; he adds that the army had nothing for transport in an active campaign of any duration. Proceeding, he delicately points out that Gage was not the man for the situation, and laments again that the general had no means of knowing what passed in the American councils, or even within the American lines.

This is but another proof, if one were needed, of the poor use to which Church had put his opportunities. Surely he, as Arnold later, sold his soul to little purpose. Few things in this campaign are more honorable to America than the fact that Washington's most precious secret, his lack of powder, though known to many, never came to the ears of the British generals. One may question if the truth, if told, would have been believed, for men of Gage and Howe's training could scarcely suppose a man capable of such daring and dogged obstinacy as to hold his post before them without powder, or guns, or, as it finally turned out, almost without men.

But no statement has been made that the commanders heard even rumors of Washington's difficulties.

After Bunker Hill, then, the British generals plainly saw that they could never campaign successfully with Boston as a base. As to what should best be done, Gage had no idea ; Burgoyne, however, was ready with a plan. He proposed to keep in Boston as small a garrison, supported by as small a fleet, as could safely be left, and to send the rest of the troops and ships to harry the coast. This proposition, if by the vague term of chastisement he meant the burning of defenceless towns, was unworthy of Burgoyne ; but when later he proposed with this detached force to occupy Rhode Island, doubtless using Newport as a base, he outlined a plan which, if followed, would have seriously embarrassed the Americans. But the advice was not taken, and for months the British generals contented themselves with wishing they were at New York, without taking any steps toward going there.

One thing at least they should have done. It will be remembered that the American occupancy of Bunker Hill had been precipitated by knowledge of a British plan to take Dorchester Heights. This plan of Gage's was not abandoned after the battle. It is spoken of in a letter of Burgoyne's, and is laid down as a part of his scheme to make Boston secure while his marauding fleet menaced southern New England. We are even able to suppose that feeble moves toward seizing the Heights were twice made. Once a couple of regiments, on transports, dropped down the channel; and once two regiments were withdrawn from Charlestown to Boston, with various companies from the castle. Lieutenant Barker gives the reason why in the latter case nothing was done: "the Genl. hearing that they had got intelligence and reinforced that place with 4000 men." But this is mere rumor; the Americans had not yet sent any troops into Dorchester. This leaves us very much in the dark as to why the Heights were not occupied; but

occupied they were not; the plan receives no further mention, and though from month to month the British watched Washington seizing posts ever nearer to Boston, they behaved in all respects as if he were under pledge to avoid Dorchester.

Gage's chief activity was in fortifying. He strengthened his existing works, and entrenched himself particularly well at Bunker Hill. As the American redoubt was of little value to the British, they made their main defence upon the top of the higher hill, and mounted guns to sweep Charlestown Neck and the country beyond. Little by little both Gage and his successor strengthened this post, cutting down trees for abatis, and making advanced posts similar to those at Boston Neck. Before the end of the siege it was the strongest British post, and Washington knew better than to molest it, especially when he had a better move to make.

Actual military operations were trifling. In retaliation for an American attack, on the 30th of July the regulars made a sally from



Boston toward Roxbury, drove in the American advance guard, and burnt a house or two. The undertaking appears to have been without object, and resulted in nothing except some harmless cannonading. At other times armed boats ventured along the Cambridge shore, or tried the rivers, always to be sent back by the bullets of Yankee sharpshooters. When the Virginia riflemen appeared, however, there was less of this diversion. These men, finding themselves debarred from the larger field operations, resolved at least to get something in return for their long march. So they set themselves to watch for the appearance of British exploring parties, and even stalked the sentries. The officers indignantly complained that this was not war according to rule, but both they and their sentries took care not to expose themselves. The largest operation undertaken by the British was at the approach of winter, when early in November they sent a small force to Lechmere's Point, at a time when a very high tide had converted the place into an

island. They took a few cows, and lost a couple of men; on retiring they pointed to the American unwillingness to attack them, but this, as we have already learned, was on account of the spoiled cartridges.

All these operations, it will be seen, took place practically within the limits of the Back Bay and its adjacent waters, into which flowed the Charles River and a few creeks. Once or twice British boats tried to explore the Mystic, but with the coming of the riflemen that diversion stopped. When finally the Yankees dragged whale-boats to the Mystic and Charles, and began building floating batteries on their own account, British curiosity as to the American shore-line lapsed entirely.

Down the harbor Gage did nothing, except to send, tardily, to repel American expeditions. We have seen that the British could not save the lighthouse. The Yankee fishermen now took occasion to remove from the islands the hay and live stock which they had not taken before Bunker Hill. Their

activities drew from Burgoyne an indignant letter.

“It may be asked in England, ‘What is the Admiral doing?’

“I wish I were able to answer that question satisfactorily, but I can only say what he is *not* doing.

“That he is *not* supplying us with sheep and oxen, the dinners of the best of us bear meagre testimony; the state of our hospitals bears a more melancholy one.

“He is *not* defending his own flocks and herds, for the enemy have repeatedly plundered his own islands.

“He is *not* defending the other islands in the harbour, for the enemy in force landed from a great number of boats, and burned the lighthouse at noonday (having first killed or taken the party of marines which was posted there) almost under the guns of two or three men-of-war.

“He is *not* employing his ships to keep up communication and intelligence with the King’s servants and friends at different parts

of the continent, for I do not believe that General Gage has received a letter from any correspondent out of Boston these six weeks.

“He is intent upon greater objects, you will think, — supporting in the great points the dignity of the British flag, — and where a number of boats have been built for the enemy; privateers fitted out; prizes carried in; the King’s armed vessels sunk; the crews made prisoners; the officers killed, — he is doubtless enforcing instant restitution and reparation by the voice of his cannon and laying the towns in ashes that refuse his terms? Alas! he is not.”<sup>1</sup>

Burgoyne finishes his indictment by lumping with the admiral’s inefficiencies the weaknesses of quartermaster-generals, adjutant-generals, secretaries, and commissaries. In all this we catch a glimpse of one result of the king’s policy, which was to reward his friends and rebuke his enemies. Since he classed with his enemies the Whigs

<sup>1</sup> Fonblanque’s “Burgoyne,” 197-198.



who were at home, he had only Tories to draw from. From them came Admiral Graves, and the crowd of incompetents who filled offices in America. The royal service was now paying the piper.

One result Burgoyne has noted very plainly, in the lack of fresh provision. The admiral could have protected the stock on the harbor islands, and without unnecessary violence could have seized provisions from the shore towns. This, however, he did not do, and we soon find the army complaining of its fare. It was not that the commissary was negligent; even the moneyed officers were at times unable to satisfy their desire for fresh meat, the supply of which was uncertain. For lack of hay, the milk supply soon disappeared, since cows could not be fed and had to be killed. Cheerful news came to the American camp that the venerable town bull had been sold for beef. The army even tired of its supply of fish, which, to be sure, never was great, though then as now Boston lay close to good fishing grounds.

Salt pork was the main reliance, and before the middle of the summer the army had had altogether too much of that.

In consequence of this restricted diet the wounded from Bunker Hill died in great numbers. Of the wounded American prisoners very few survived. Some, as Washington heard, were operated on in the common jail, in which most of them were confined, and where the chances of their recovery were slight. They fared "very hard," said John Leach, who had opportunity to know; not one of them survived amputation. As to the rest, there can be no question that they were badly treated. Their doctor complained that they had had no bread for two days; the Provost replied "they might eat the Nail Heads, and knaw the plank and be damn'd."<sup>1</sup> Their more fortunate fellow-prisoners, who were not taken in arms and who received food from their families in Boston, sent the Bunker Hill prisoners what comforts they could bribe the soldiers to take to them; but, says

<sup>1</sup> Leach's "Journal."

Leach's diary, "they have no Wood for days together, to Warm their Drink, and dying men drink them cold." By the 21st of September eighteen out of twenty-nine prisoners had died in the jail.

Yet even the British wounded showed a high mortality. This was largely on account of the food, which, although it was the best that was to be had, was none too good for suffering men. The high death rate was in part due to the American marksmanship, which caused many body wounds. What with such wounds, and such food, and the unaccustomed heat, there were so many deaths among the wounded that it was seriously stated that the American bullets were poisoned.

There was, then, considerable discontent among the British soldiery. Of it at one time the Americans took ingenious advantage. When the wind was setting toward the British lines at Charlestown, the Americans at the Medford lines scattered handbills that were driven to the British sentries. On the bills

was to be read a comparison intended to increase British discontent. It ran :—

## PROSPECT HILL

- I. Seven dollars a month.
- II. Fresh provisions and in plenty.
- III. Health.
- IV. Freedom, ease, affluence, and a good farm.

## BUNKER'S HILL

- I. Three pence a day.
- II. Rotten salt pork.
- III. The scurvy.
- IV. Slavery, beggary, and want.

These handbills thus coming into the hands of the privates were passed about secretly, until the officers got wind of the device, and complained to the Americans. The retort was that the British themselves had already been tempting sentries to desert. This deserting did go on throughout the siege, from either side, though it would seem as if more of the British fled from their service. Into whichever lines they went, the deserters always brought highly colored tales to buy their welcome. The leaders very soon learned how little reliance could be placed upon such



information. "We ought not to catch at such shadows as that. We have nothing under God to depend upon, but our own strength." <sup>1</sup>

If the British private was discontented, that was his habit; and though the officers grumbled as well, they had comparatively little to complain of. To be sure, the food was coarse, but it was plentiful. Even the unaccustomed heat would seem comfortable to a Bostonian of to-day. The marine officers had more pleasant conditions, with their open ports and harbor breezes, and decks frequently sluiced with water. But the town itself had no tall buildings or confined spaces; generally speaking, it was open from water to water, with plentiful shade. Boston in 1775 must have been as cool as its own summer resorts of the twentieth century.

The Tories, at least, found it bearable. They were accustomed to the summer heat, and knew themselves much better off than

<sup>1</sup> William T. Miller, of Newport, R.I., to his wife Lydia. Mass. Hist. and Gen. Register, 1855.

the unfortunate members of their party who had been unable to escape to the British lines. Many of the country Tories were confined to their estates, and forbidden to communicate with each other. "I wish to God," wrote Samuel Paine, "all our friends were here out of the hands of such Villains." Compared with such treatment, serenades by thirteen-inch mortars and twenty-four pounders were apparently trifling — though the ladies did not think so. One, writing of the skirmish on the night of July 30, spoke of the "most dreadful cannonading," and "the apprehensions that naturally seize every one, either of the enemy breaking in, or the town being set on fire."<sup>1</sup> Even Samuel Paine saw the serious side of the situation. "These," he asks, "are Governor Hutchinson's countrymen that would not fight, are they?"

It was because he realized that fight they would, "and like the devil," that he and others considered enlisting in the various corps which were organized in the town.

<sup>1</sup> Frothingham's "Siege," 230.

According to Frothingham, who could find no statistics of the numbers of Tory volunteers, there were at least three corps formed: the Loyal American Associators under Timothy Ruggles, the Loyal Irish Volunteers under James Forrest, and the Royal Fencible Americans under Colonel Graham.<sup>1</sup> According to Samuel Paine, there was a fourth corps, but it is not named. A commission in one of these organizations was particularly attractive, as the service was expected to be short, and at its expiration the officers were to go upon half pay. Further, the duties were very light, being confined to drilling and patrolling the town. In the military events of the siege these corps took no part whatever.

It must be remembered, however, that out of this situation England did gain some valuable soldiers. The mettle of a few of the Tories was shown at Bunker Hill, where they went as individual volunteers, and served with the troops. Others, dis-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

dainig the toy-soldiering of their friends, seized the chance to join the regular army, and fought in it throughout the war, or until their deaths. Such men were John Coffin, Leverett Saltonstall, and the two Thomas Gilberts.

Yet men of this quality were few, and at least at this stage of the war the Tories were of little service to their king. Most of them were content to wait until the time when the regulars should scatter the besiegers and conduct the loyalists to their homes. Meanwhile they enjoyed the society into which they were thrown. "We have here," wrote Samuel Paine, "Earls, Lords, and Baronets, I assure you Names that Sound grand." These names did bring to the Tories a fair amount of social gayety. Mrs. Gage was at the head of her own little circle, not always enjoyed by those who could not forget her American birth. There were other groups of ladies who, whether English or Tory, contrived to make the time pass pleasantly for themselves and for the men. With



few responsibilities, and with confidence in the future, the loyalists had a pleasant enough summer, and saw ahead of them a comfortable winter.

The situation of the Whigs was not so enjoyable. Before Bunker Hill, every one of them who could leave Boston had done so. But there were many of them left, and among them were a number of the more respectable and prominent of the Whigs. None of them wrote letters, and few indeed kept diaries; there is, therefore, a notable lack of information concerning their doings. We do know, however, that they were at a great disadvantage as against their Tory acquaintances. No privileges of the commissary were theirs, and no favors were to be had from the military authorities. When there was fresh meat in the town the Whigs could get little of it without repudiating their political creed; when the supply was scant, the Whigs went without. "They even denied us," wrote John Andrews, looking back upon this period, "the privilege of buying the surplusage of

the soldiers' rations." Even before Bunker Hill he had written, "It's hard to stay cooped up here and feed upon salt provisions, more especially without one's wife. . . . Pork and beans one day, and beans and pork another, and fish when we can catch it." Throughout the summer the situation was little bettered. "A loaf of bread the size we formerly gave three pence for, thought ourselves well off to get for a shilling. Butter at two shillings. Milk, for months without tasting any."

There were certain Whigs whose experiences were more grim. To Gage, always in fear of betrayal to the enemy, there came rumors pointing to men whose known sentiments, or whose actions, subjected them to suspicion. Among these were one Carpenter, a barber, who had swum to Cambridge and back; one "Dorrington, his son and maid, for blowing up flies"<sup>1</sup>; but particularly John Leach and James Lovell, schoolmasters, with Peter

<sup>1</sup> This obscure diversion caused the Dorringtons to be suspected of signalling at night to the rebels.

Edes, printer, and his father's partner, John Gill. All of these four were obnoxious to the Tories, being outspoken Whigs and teachers of sedition, whether in their schools or their publications. One by one they were imprisoned in the common jail, and held there during various terms. Their treatment was harsh and ungenerous, held in close neighborhood with felons and loose livers, and not informed of what they were accused. Leach and Edes kept diaries when in prison. "From the 2d July to the 17th," writes Leach, "a Complicated scene of Oaths, Curses, Debauchery, and the most horrid Blasphemy, committed by the Provost Marshal, his Deputy and Soldiers, who were our guard, Soldier prisoners, and sundry soldier women, confined for Thefts, &c. . . . When our Wives, Children, and Friends came to see us, (which was seldom they were permitted) we seemed to want them gone, notwithstanding we were desirous of their Company, as they were exposed to hear the most abandon'd language, as was grating to the ears of all

sober persons." This Leach suspected to be intentional, but the offensive actions and words were incessant, especially on Sundays.

On the 17th Leach's son died, "whom I left well in my house"; but he was not allowed to attend the funeral, nor to be tried, nor dismissed. Three weeks after he and Lovell had been put in jail they first learned of what they were accused: Lovell of "being a Spy, and giving intelligence to the rebels," and Leach of "being a spy, and suspected of taking plans." Their examination was a farce, the witness against them not knowing them apart. They were remanded to jail, and lay there until October. Lovell fell sick, and got a little better food, but no attention from his jailers — "no Compassion toward him any more than a Dog." On the same day Leach noted that the Provost "Cursed and Damned my little Child, for a Damn'd Rebel; he even Trembles at bringing my Diet." Lovell grew better, and the vexatious treatment continued with petty tyrannies. At last, although no trial had yet been held, Edes,



Gill, and Leach were released upon sureties of two inhabitants that they would not leave the town.

Lovell was kept in jail. He was son of Master John Lovell of the Latin School, in which he was usher until the opening of the war. His frank utterances had so incensed the authorities that they kept him in prison until the end of the siege, and then carried him with them to Halifax. His father was a Tory, and, so far as the diaries of the prison mates show, made no attempt to visit his son in prison. James Lovell was exchanged in the summer of 1776.

Through Edes' prison diary, and the brief jottings which pass for the journal of Timothy Newell, selectman, we get a glimpse of a turn-coat. The incident in which he figures is the only one that caused Newell, who gave a scant hundred and twenty-five words to Bunker Hill battle, to write at any length. One John Morrison, formerly minister at Peterborough, New Hampshire, had been "obliged," says Edes, "to quit his people

on account of his scandalous behaviour." He joined the provincial army, and is said to have fought at Bunker Hill; but a week later he joined the British with the usual mis-statements of the American intentions. In the middle of September, Morrison moved for permission to use for his services the Brattle Street Church, "Dr. Cooper's Meetinghouse," of which Timothy Newell was a member of the parish committee. Newell, "with an emotion of resentment," roundly refused to deliver the key to Morrison and his friends, and made his way into the presence of the governor, where he stated that Morrison was a man of infamous character. But the turn-coat had respectable backers. Gage required the key of Newell, and got it; and Morrison held at least one service in the church. It was to this service, on the 17th of September, that Edes was conducted, doubtless as a privilege, and heard a political sermon on the ingratitude of the provincials. Edes remarked that the Tories present affected to grin, but it was horribly, with a ghastly

smile. The newspapers, however, called it an excellent discourse to a genteel audience, and announced regular services. Morrison, still contemptuously styled the deserter, figures again in Newell's diary in November, when he informed against an old Dutch woman for trying to carry out of town more money than her permit allowed. His profit on this was ten dollars. When winter approached, the Brattle Street Church was taken for use as a barracks, and Morrison got himself a place in the commissary department, which perhaps was more to his liking than sermonizing.<sup>1</sup>

The interview with Newell gives us a glimpse of Gage in almost the last of his troubles with the stiff-necked Bostonians. Less than a fortnight later<sup>2</sup> he received word from London that the king desired his presence, in order to consult upon future operations. Probably the unlucky commander saw

<sup>1</sup> Leach's and Edes' "Journals," N. E. Hist and Gen. Register, 1865; Newell's "Journal," Mass. Hist. Soc. Collections, i, series iv; Frothingham's "Siege," 239; Sabine's "Loyalists."

<sup>2</sup> September 26.

in the message the end of his commission, but he went as one expecting to return. As was customary, he was presented with adulatory addresses, and on October 10 departed in state. His welcome in England was not so stately. The king did give him an interview, and listened attentively to his explanations, but it was popularly suggested that the unsuccessful general be created Lord Lexington, Baron of Bunker Hill. Gage's command was not restored to him, and he never again went on active service.

One legacy indeed he left, perhaps the worst act of his administration and the most far-reaching, although the personal blame does not lie with Gage himself. On the 4th of October he sent out a small fleet of vessels which accomplished more harm than good. It skirmished with privateers, and eventually, reaching Falmouth, now Portland in Maine, but then in Massachusetts territory, attempted to levy upon the town. Captain Mowatt, the commander, picked a quarrel with the inhabitants, and finding



them unyielding, burnt their village. The blame lies between Mowatt and Admiral Graves, both of whom had grudges against the town on account of a previous incident. The ministry repudiated the act, but the fact is undeniable that it was within the spirit of the instructions given to a later expedition, to "destroy any towns" that would not submit.<sup>1</sup> The effect on the Americans, however, was very far from teaching submission. The news of the burning of Falmouth did as much as any other event to impress the provincials with the impossibility of an agreement with the king.

In Gage's place now stood Howe, on whom the British hopes centred. According to the Tory Samuel Paine, Howe united the spirit of a Wolfe with the genius of a Marlborough. Without prizing him quite so highly, both the army and the administration looked to Howe for action and results. It seemed to them that now at last something must happen.

<sup>1</sup> Instructions for Clinton's expedition to the southward. Frothingham's "Siege," 292.

But Howe, though with a willing army at his back, disciplined and well equipped, did nothing. He strengthened the Charlestown lines and the fort on Bunker Hill, he improved the defences at Boston Neck, and he began various batteries on Beacon Hill and the shores of the Common. He demolished a number of buildings in the north end of the town, in order to make communication between his posts more direct. But except for the little expedition across the Back Bay to Lechmere's Point, which netted a few cows, Howe attempted no offensive operations. As already shown, the regulars returned from Lechmere's Point as soon as the provincials assembled in numbers, and no attempt was made to hold the little hill. Other skirmishes there were from time to time, but these were insignificant, and they were all.

The fact is that Howe's opinion coincided exactly with those of Gage and Burgoyne. The country was too strong to be forced, especially since the Americans had spent a

summer on their entrenchments. There was no profit in taking a rebel fort if the army and its situation were to be weakened thereby. Howe looked with longing eyes toward New York, took up Burgoyne's idea of a post in Rhode Island, and believed that if he had twenty thousand men holding all three positions the rebels would be beaten. But such an army was not forthcoming, and the question arose whether he had best stay in Boston or go to New York. In reply to questions from the ministry, Howe pointed out that he had not a large enough fleet to convey himself, his stores, and the Tories, from the place. It was therefore understood that more ships and men should be supplied him in the spring, and that meanwhile he should go into winter quarters.

This was done. Buildings in the town were arranged to accommodate the troops, two of the churches being fitted up for this purpose. The tents were struck, and the army made itself snug. Howe busied himself with routine matters of the camp, and

refused to budge. Though Washington first fortified Cobble Hill in Somerville, the nearest he had yet come to the British posts, and though after that he came a step nearer, seizing Lechmere's Point, Howe simply fired from cannon, but made no attempt to storm the works. The cannonading merely inured the Americans to danger, and seeing that it did them good rather than harm, Howe presently stopped it. Washington, perhaps not aware of the strength of his own position, declared himself "unable, upon any principle whatever," to account for Howe's inaction. He suspected it might be intended to lull him into a false sense of security, but resolved to be more vigilant than ever.



## CHAPTER XIII

### WASHINGTON'S DIFFICULTIES

THE situation at Boston in the fall of 1775 presents an interesting comparison: two generals of opposing armies, each ready to welcome an attack, but each unable to deliver one. The difference between the two, and the fact which determined the outcome, was in the natures of the two men. Howe, from a certain sluggishness of disposition, was content to sit tight, and wait until the government at home should send him his relief. Though at each move his enemy came nearer, Howe still appeared to believe that Dorchester was safe from seizure, and was content so to believe. But Washington was not satisfied to be still. His nature urged him to action, and though he knew himself too weak for an assault, he constantly schemed and worked to put his army into condition to strike.

In some ways his organization was already complete. He had under him many of the men who were to serve him through the war. To be sure, he had Charles Lee, "the worst present that could be made to any army;" but Lee's part in the siege was slight, for Washington frequently employed him for distant undertakings. Gates was still present also, but in a subordinate capacity. And another of those who, before the war was over, did their best to wreck the American cause, was present for a while in the person of Benedict Arnold, already distinguished by his share in the taking of Ticonderoga. Early in September, however, Arnold was sent on his fruitless mission against Quebec.

But besides these men, not one of whom had as yet proved his weakness, Washington had already at his back some of the best soldiers whom the war produced. Among the higher officers were Putnam, Thomas, Sullivan, Heath, and more particularly Greene. Of lower grade were Stark, Morgan, Prescott, and, not yet well known, Knox, the Boston

bookseller whom we have seen endeavoring to prevent the Massacre, who had studied tactics in his own volumes and at the manoeuvres of the regulars, and who had escaped from Boston just before the 17th of June. There were yet others who were destined to distinguish themselves, and Washington knew that he had, among his officers, as courageous and intelligent soldiers as were to be found anywhere.

Yet they were but a nucleus, while his supplies remained few and poor, and the organization of the army unsatisfactory. As the winter approached, Washington looked forward uneasily to the expiration of the terms of enlistment of his troops. Some would lapse in December, the rest at the first of January. His regiments were not uniform in size, and they retained too much of the provincial jealousy which had already troubled him, and which had perhaps lost Bunker Hill. It was very evident to him that an entirely new army should be organized.

It was therefore welcome to him that Congress should send a committee to help him in the matter of reorganization. On October 18 the committee, with Franklin at its head, met with Washington, his staff, and delegates from the four colonies which until now had, practically alone, been prosecuting the siege. The subject had been already discussed by the council of war, and the little convention was made acquainted with the discrepancies in the organizations of the different regiments, and the needs of the army. It was decided to reduce the number of regiments from thirty-eight to twenty-six. This meant not so much to reduce the number of men as the number of officers. The term of reënlistment was to be one year, and the delegates assured Washington that he could count on twenty thousand men from Massachusetts, eight thousand from Connecticut, three thousand from New Hampshire, and fifteen hundred from Rhode Island. The regiments were to be uniform in size, consisting of eight companies each; besides



regular infantry, there were to be riflemen and artillery. A system for clothing and supplying the army was agreed upon. When the little convention had broken up, the Committee from Congress remained for a few days, revising the articles of war, considering the disposition of naval prizes, and discussing a number of minor topics. Upon the committee's return to Philadelphia, its actions were ratified by Congress.<sup>1</sup>

Washington then set himself with new assurance to his task. Thanks to the convention, he felt that he had a united country at his back, and that much had been done to dissipate colonial jealousies. These are surprising to us of to-day: one is astonished to find Greene seriously assuring "the gentlemen from the southward" that the four New England colonies, as soon as they had conquered King George, would not turn their arms against the South. Yet had there been any such intention, the New Englanders

<sup>1</sup> See the "Writings of Washington," iii, 123-124, note.

already had their hands full with the British, and Washington was by no means out of the woods. On paper he had an excellent organization; but in fact, everything was still to be done.

With the approach of winter, the first task was to house his army. This was gradually accomplished, and the regiments went into their winter quarters. For a time, however, there was a scarcity of food and fuel. This was due, not to a lack of either, but to the weakness in the system of providing for them. For some weeks there was distress and discontent; at times we are told that the troops ate their provision raw, and most of the orchards and shade trees within the camp were cut down for fuel. Washington vigorously represented the state of the case to the Massachusetts congress; he gave permission to cut wood in private wood-lots, promising payment; and finally the need was met. The towns sent generous supplies of wood to the camp, rations were provided in plenty, and the only period of hardship which

the Americans endured was safely passed before the winter set in.

There was not much for the army to do when once the barracks were built and new quarters taken. The work of fortifying Lechmere's Point went on slowly, on account of the frost; it was not until the end of February that the redoubt was completed, and its guns mounted. But the troops were drilled, and were kept busy in perfecting the fortifications. Washington seized every chance to improve his defences, as we see him when planning new redoubts to guard against the possibility of a sortie from the Neck.<sup>1</sup>

The news of the burning of Falmouth reached Washington on the 24th of October, and greatly roused his indignation. As it was expected that the British fleet might next descend upon Portsmouth, he sent General Sullivan thither, with orders to put the harbor in a state of defence, and at all events to save the small store of powder which had been brought into that place. This was a

<sup>1</sup> See letter to Ward, "Writings," iii, 161.

capture by the little navy. Mowatt's fleet, however, made no attempt upon Portsmouth, and presently returned to Boston. Feeling temporarily secure against further depredations upon the coast, Washington put his whole energy into the reorganization of his army.

The period from the end of November until the early part of February was one of the hardest in Washington's career. His difficulties were those which we have seen already, want of powder and want of arms, but to them was added the great fear of a lack of men. As to powder, its supply still fluctuated, small quantities coming in irregularly, and being steadily used in equally niggardly amounts, or slowly spoiling in the soldiers' pouches. Muskets were still scanty, and Washington saw no hope except in buying those of his soldiers whose terms were about to expire, or in sending agents through the neighboring towns to secure what they could find. There was a corresponding lack of cannon, bayonets, flints, and small appurtenances.



But weaknesses of this kind were nothing as compared with the threatened weakness in men. Washington was deeply disappointed at his failure to recruit his newly planned army. Although the delegates of the provinces had promised him full regiments, the new recruiting system seemed to fail almost entirely. The general presently perceived several distinct factors that were working against its success.

In the first place, the new plan provided for fewer officers in the new army. Many of the provincial regiments, especially those of Massachusetts, had been over-officered, and now, when the number of regiments was less by twelve, it was evident that scores of officers must either accept lower rank or leave the army entirely. It was found that most of those who could not obtain equal rank were unwilling to remain, and that they were influencing their men to leave the army with them.

Besides this, provincial jealousies worked strongly in this matter of officers. Massa-

chusetts officers who had been forced out of service might have found places in the Connecticut regiments, but the soldiers of the other colony would have none of them. For each company and each platoon held firmly to the old idea that it must be consulted concerning its officers, and no private would consent to be commanded by a man from another colony. This alone made plentiful trouble.

Finally the men themselves had ideas of their own as to whether they cared to enlist. To begin with, the shrewd among them reckoned that if they only held out long enough they might secure bounties for reënlisting. Some were finicky as to their officers, and waited until they should be satisfied. And most of them perceived that as a reward for patriotism they might at least receive furloughs, and stood out for them.

The details of the work of enlisting were very obscure and complicated. It was found that officers were endeavoring to recruit their own companies, and in their zeal had enrolled men who were already registered elsewhere.

Outsiders, anxious for commissions, were similarly forming companies, and presenting them for acceptance. Washington steadily refused to receive such unauthorized organizations. And finally it was suspected that many men who had given in their names had no intention of serving.

What would make their defection more certain was the irregularity of pay. Congress had appropriated sums of money, but the currency reached Washington slowly. It was very singular, he complained, that the signers of the scrip could not keep pace with his needs. Further, Congress had a very imperfect idea of the magnitude of his legitimate needs; the appropriations were niggardly. As the new year approached, when it was important that the men should be paid, and receive assurance of further pay, Washington wrote to urge more remittances, that the soldiers might be satisfied.

Even the crews of the little navy gave Washington no peace. His "plague, trouble, and vexation" with them he was unable to

express; he believed that there was not on earth a more disorderly set. One crew deserted, and its vessel was docked.

To be sure, there were moments of satisfaction in these dreary weeks of trial. Certain of the rejected officers rose above their disappointments. One of these was Colonel Whitcomb, who was not given a regiment in the new establishment. At this his men became so dissatisfied that they decided not to enlist at all. Colonel Whitcomb, in order to persuade them to remain, announced his willingness to enlist as a private. The situation was saved by Colonel Jonathan Brewer, who offered his command to Colonel Whitcomb. Washington, in a general order, thanked both of the officers. Brewer was made Barrack-Master, "until something better worth his acceptance can be provided." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the "Writings of Washington," iii, 161, note. The facts concerning Washington's difficulties with enlisting are taken chiefly from this volume, where they can best be studied.

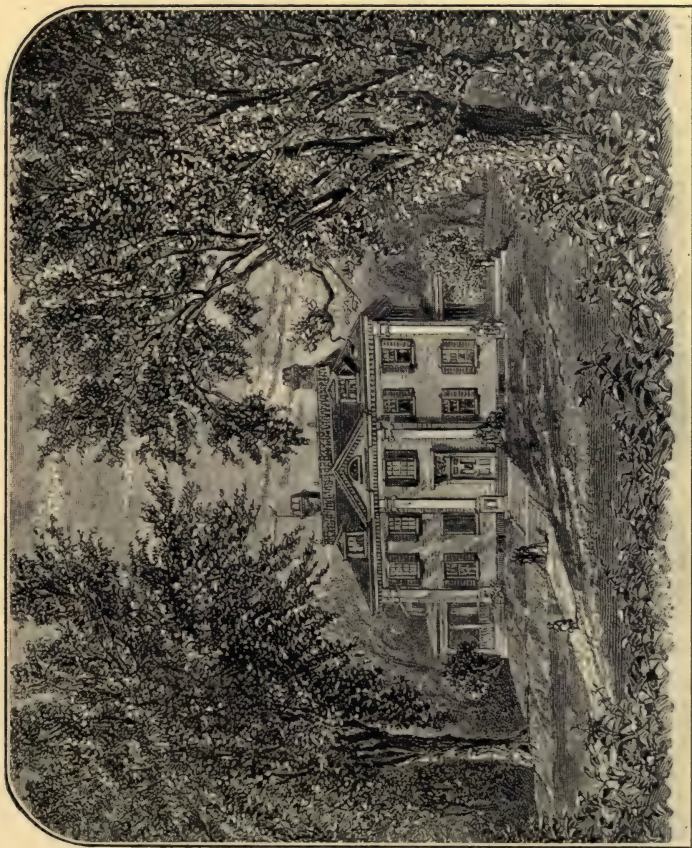


Other relief was provided by captures of British vessels. Of great importance to both armies was the capture of the *Nancy*, an ordnance brig with a complete cargo of military supplies — saving only powder. So valuable did Washington consider the capture that he at once sent four companies to the spot where the stores were landed, impressed teams for transportation, and called out the neighboring militia lest Howe should make an effort to recover the royal property. The British were on their part greatly disgusted at the loss of the brig, not merely as weakening them, but also as strengthening the enemy. The chief prize on the ship was a thirteen-inch brass mortar, which on its arrival in camp was greeted with acclamation, and by means of a bottle of rum was solemnly christened the Congress.

It was about this time that Washington had the satisfaction of being joined by his wife. There had been a suggestion that her residence on the Potomac was not safe, but even before the naval raids Washington had

begun to suggest her joining him. She arrived on the 11th of December, and resided until the end of the siege with him at his headquarters in the old house still standing on Brattle Street, Cambridge. The house has had an interesting history, having been built by the Tory Vassalls, occupied by the Marblehead regiment, by Washington, by Dr. Andrew Craigie, surgeon at Bunker Hill, by Jared Sparks, Edward Everett, Noah Webster, and by the poet Longfellow, whose family still owns it. The quarters were for Washington central and pleasant; they gave him his last taste of home life for years.

Yet we are not to imagine him at any time free of difficulties. With December began his troubles with the Connecticut troops, whose enlistment had expired. In spite of previous promises to remain until their places were filled, and against orders to leave their weapons, many of the Connecticut men tried to slip away, guns and all. Washington frequently speaks of them in his letters of the first half of December. In securing



WASHINGTON'S HEADQUARTERS





their return he was well aided by the officers, and by the aged but still energetic Governor Trumbull, who heard of the actions of his men with "grief, surprise, and indignation." Trumbull called the assembly of Connecticut together to consider the situation, but action was forestalled by the people of the different towns. The hint that the soldiers had best return voluntarily, lest they be sent back with a feathered adornment that nature had not provided, was sufficient to hurry most of them back to their service.

No sooner had this matter been smoothed over, than Washington had to meet the general situation, when on the first of January most of the enlistments would expire. For some weeks he had been anxiously watching the returns of the enlistments, and the figures frequently plunged him into depression. On the 28th of November, finding that but thirty-five hundred men had enlisted, he wrote: "Such a dearth of public spirit, such stock-jobbing, and such fertility in all the low arts to obtain advantages of one kind

or another, in this great change of military arrangement, I never saw before, and pray God's mercy I may never be witness to again." A week later he found himself under obligations to give furlough to fifteen hundred men a week, in order to satisfy them. To fill their places and those of the Connecticut troops, he called on Massachusetts and New Hampshire for five thousand militia. By the middle of December scarcely six thousand men had enlisted, and on Christmas Day only eight thousand five hundred. On New Year's Day his army, which was to have been at least twenty thousand men, was not quite half that number.

Under such circumstances many a weaker man would have thrown up his office or abandoned his post. Washington stuck to his task. If Howe would but remain inactive, the lag-gard country would in time retrieve itself. As a matter of fact, many of the soldiers, after a brief period of liberty, returned of their own accord to the standard. We find at least one case in the diary of David How,

which, in addition to revealing his actions, gives a glimpse of the camp at the end of the year, when many of the men were going away, and the others were joining their new regiments.

"This Day," writes How on the 30th of December, "we paraded and had our guns took from us By the Major to prise them.

"31. This Day we have been In an uprore about packun our Things up In order to go home a Monday morning as Soon as we Can.

"Jan 1. We have ben all Day a pecking up our Things For to go home.

"2d we all Left Cambridg this morning I went to mr. Granger and staid all night.

"3d I went to methuen.

"5d I went to Haver hill to by some Leather for Bretches.

"6 day I come to Andover and Staid at Mr. osgoods.

"7 day I come to Cambridge about Six a Clock at Night.

"Jany the 8 1776 This Day I Began with Mr. Watson. . . .

"Jan 14.<sup>1</sup> This Day I wint to Cobble Hill & to Litchmor point and to prospeck hill & So Home again. Nothing new.

"22. I listed with Leut David Chandler in Coln Sergant Regiment."

And so David How, veteran of Bunker Hill, and doubtless many other young men, found the lure of the camp, and let us say the chance to serve the country, too much to withstand. Freedom to earn their own wages, and to stroll about the fortifications on Sundays, were not to be measured against the romance of soldiering and the hope of battle.

This same New Year's Day, 1776, occurred an event of importance in the hoisting of the flag with the thirteen stripes. Previously the colonies had used different devices, in the South a rattlesnake flag with the motto, "Don't tread on me," and for the Connecticut troops the colony arms and the motto *Qui transtulit sustinet*, "which we construe thus: 'God, who transplanted us hither, will sup-

<sup>1</sup> This was a Sunday.



port us.'"<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts had used the pine-tree flag and the motto "Appeal to Heaven," and the little navy had a sign by which its ships were known to each other, "the ensign up to the main topping-lift." Now for the first time the thirteen stripes with the British crosses in the corner were raised, amid much enthusiasm.

Curiously, this coincided with the coming of the king's recent speech in Parliament, and a strange interpretation was put upon the appearance of the new flag. The British had caused to be sent to the American lines many copies of the speech, expecting that its expression of the king's determination to prosecute the war, even by the use of foreign troops, would bring the rebels to their knees. The cheering in the American camp, all the louder on account of the sentiments of his gracious majesty, and the appearance of the new flag, combined to make the British suppose that the provincials were weakening. "By this time," wrote Washington grimly on

<sup>1</sup> Frothingham's "Siege," 104.

the 4th, "I presume they begin to think it strange, that we have not made a formal surrender of our lines."

It was well that he could jest, however sternly, for his situation was newly complicated by the permission of Congress to attack Boston whenever he might think expedient, "notwithstanding the town and property in it may be destroyed." Such permission was equivalent to a broad hint, and there were not lacking suggestions from many obscure quarters that the country would be more content if its general should relieve it of the presence of the British army. Of "chimney corner heroes" Washington had a genuine contempt, but the resolve of Congress was another matter, especially when it came through the hands of John Hancock. He was the largest property-owner in the town, and prospectively the greatest sufferer by its destruction, yet he cheerfully wrote, "May God crown your attempt with success!"

Long before now, had Washington been able, he would have attempted to storm the

town. But as often as he called a council of war to consider the matter, so often did his generals advise against the attempt. The Americans were doubtful, and Lee, affecting to mistrust the temper of the troops, would not advise the venture. As to burning the town by throwing carcasses<sup>1</sup> into it, Lee told the others that the town could not be set on fire by such means. Washington looked for a chance to assault the town by crossing on the ice, but for a long time the Back Bay did not freeze, and when at last it did, he had neither men nor powder. Such then was his situation when he answered the letter of Hancock.<sup>2</sup> He begged Congress to consider his situation if, in spite of their wishes, he did not act. And that they should clearly understand, he wrote these words:—

“It is not in the pages of history, perhaps,

<sup>1</sup> Carcasses were hollow shells with several openings. They were filled with combustibles, and when thrown into a town were intended to set fire to buildings.

<sup>2</sup> Washington's communications to Congress were addressed to Hancock, as its President.

to furnish a case like ours. To maintain a post within musket shot of the enemy, for six months together, without and at the same time to disband one army, and recruit another, within that distance of twenty-odd British regiments, is more, probably, than was ever attempted."

The significant omission in this passage is the word "powder." At another time, when doubtful of the safety of his letter, he used the paraphrase, "what we greatly need." He knew that his correspondents would supply the omission and interpret the reference. But once at least, on the 14th of January, when writing to Joseph Reed, formerly his aide, to whom at this period he seems to have written more freely than to any one else, Washington gave a complete account of his situation when almost at its worst, and ended with an explanation of his state of mind. Conditions are so completely summarized, and his thoughts are so frankly given, that the paragraphs had best be given entire.



“Our enlistments are at a stand; the fears I ever entertained are realized; that is, the *discontented officers* (for I do not know how else to account for it) have thrown such difficulties or stumbling-blocks in the way of recruiting, that I no longer entertain a hope of completing the army by voluntary enlistments, and I see no move or likelihood to do it by other means. In the last two weeks we have enlisted but about a thousand men; whereas I was confidently led to believe, by all the officers I conversed with, that we should by this time have had the regiments nearly completed. Our total number upon paper amounts to about ten thousand five hundred; but as a large portion of these are returned *not joined*, I never expect to receive them, as an ineffectual order has once issued to call them in. Another is now gone forth, peremptorily requiring all officers under pain of being cashiered, and recruits of being treated as deserters, to join their respective regiments by the 1st day of next month, that I may know my real strength; but if

my fears are not imaginary, I shall have a dreadful account of the advanced month's pay.<sup>1</sup> In consequence of the assurances given, and my expectation of having at least men enough to defend our lines, to which may be added my unwillingness to burthen the cause with unnecessary expense, no relief of militia has been ordered in, to supply the places of those, who are released from their engagements tomorrow, and as to whom, though many have promised to continue out the month, there is no security for their stay.

"Thus I am situated with respect to men. With regard to arms I am yet worse off. Before the dissolution of the old army, I issued an order directing three judicious men of each brigade to attend, review, and appraise the good arms of every regiment; and finding a very great unwillingness in the men to part with their arms, at the same time not having it in my power to pay them for the months of November and December,

<sup>1</sup> He had paid in advance all who had enlisted.

I threatened severely, that every soldier, who should carry away his firelock without leave, should never receive pay for those months; yet so many have been carried off, partly by stealth, but chiefly as condemned, that we have not at this time one hundred guns in the stores, of all that have been taken in the prize ship and from the soldiery, notwithstanding our regiments are not half complete. At the same time I am told, and believe it, that to restrain the enlistment to men with arms, you will get but few of the former, and still fewer of the latter which would be good for anything.

“How to get furnished I know not. I have applied to this and the neighboring colonies, but with what success time only can tell. The reflection of my situation, and that of this army, produces many an unhappy hour when all around me are wrapped in sleep. Few people know the predicament we are in, on a thousand accounts; fewer still will believe, if any disaster happens to these lines, from what cause it flows. I have often

thought how much happier I should have been, if, instead of accepting the command under such circumstances, I had taken my musket on my shoulder and entered the ranks, or, if I could have justified the measure to posterity and my own conscience, had retired to the back country, and lived in a wigwam. If I shall be able to rise superior to these and many other difficulties, I shall most religiously believe, that the finger of Providence is in it, to blind the eyes of our enemies; for surely if we get well through this month, it must be for want of their knowing the difficulties we labor under.

“Could I have foreseen the difficulties, which have come upon us; could I have known, that such a backwardness would have been discovered among the old soldiers to the service, all the generals on earth should not have convinced me of the propriety of delaying an attack upon Boston till this time.”<sup>1</sup>

One more blow Washington was to receive,

<sup>1</sup> “Writings of Washington,” iii, 238-241.



in the news of the failure of the expedition against Quebec. This came to him on the 17th of January. But from about that time, though very slowly, the prospect began to brighten. His army strengthened, money was loaned him by Massachusetts, and though early in February he reported that he had in camp two thousand men without guns, even muskets were eventually provided. Moreover, cannon were now supplied him, through the exertions of Henry Knox. Washington had detached him in November to go to Ticonderoga and Crown Point, and provide means for bringing the captured cannon to camp. The general had even hoped that more might be had from Quebec, but that expectation was now gone. Knox, in the face of many difficulties, fulfilled his mission. On December 17 he wrote from Lake George that he had got the cannon as far as that point, and with forty-two "exceedingly strong sleds" and eighty yoke of oxen expected to make the journey to Springfield, whence fresh cattle would bring him to

Cambridge. The artillery, in this humble manner, at last arrived, howitzers, mortars, and cannon, fifty-five pieces of iron or brass. With what had been captured elsewhere the supply was ample, and the guns, after a delay at Framingham, were mounted at the fortifications, or reserved for the attempt to take Dorchester. Powder also had slowly come in faster than it was used or could spoil, and Washington found himself almost ready to act.

When at last he could draw a long breath, with the feeling that the worst of the situation was over, he gave, in letters to Joseph Reed and John Hancock, his opinion of his army as it then was, and of the means to make it better. Placed behind any kind of shelter, his provincials would give a good account of themselves. But they could not yet be depended on to make an assault in the open field. For this they would have to receive severer training, and in order to acquaint them with their proper duties a longer term of service was necessary. Even now, at the

beginning of another year of service, the men had the officers too much in their power, for indulgence was necessary in order to make them enlist again. He was therefore firmly of the opinion that his present army, and all new recruits, should be enlisted "for and during the war." Thus Washington, looking beyond his still uncompleted task, like Lincoln many years later, perceived the only means to final success.

But with the means which he had at hand he was now impatient to act. It was almost March, and at any time Howe might receive the reinforcements which would enable him to take the offensive. Washington prepared to fortify Dorchester as soon as the state of the ground would permit of digging, and in order to lessen the work he prepared fascines — which were bundles of sticks — and chandeliers or frameworks to hold the bundles in place in order to serve as the body of an embankment. Remembering how at Bunker Hill the regulars had been led to suppose that the troops at the rail fence,

protected by nothing except the rails and hay, were behind an embankment, he collected ropes of hay to use if necessary for the same purpose, but also to bind the wheels of his carts that they might make no noise. Carts he collected to the number of three hundred. In the Charles River he prepared boats enough to carry twenty-eight hundred men. Two floating batteries were also made ready there; a third had earlier been destroyed by the bursting of its cannon when firing at the camp on the Common. Washington was about to strike, with the suddenness which characterized him, but also with the thorough readiness.

For his camp, even if temporarily, was now full. Early in February came in ten regiments of militia, summoned on service until the first of April. They manifested, he wrote with satisfaction, the greatest alertness, and the determination of men engaged in the cause of freedom. And on the first of March he called into camp the militia of the neighboring towns, who were to report at



Roxbury fully equipped for three days' service. To these men was read his general order, preparing their minds for action. They were forbidden to play at cards or other games of chance, and advised to ponder the importance of the cause in which they were enlisted. "But it may not be amiss for the troops to know," he added, "that if any man in action shall presume to skulk, or hide himself, or retreat from the enemy without the orders of his commanding officer, he will be instantly shot down." And with this exhortation and warning Washington concluded his preparations.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE WINTER IN BOSTON

**W**HEN the British army went into winter quarters it was nearly at the end of its difficulties concerning food. Supplies from England had been very meagre, and the occasional raids had provided poorly for the wants of the town. But since October matters had improved, largely because of the criticism of the English Whigs in Parliament. These pointed out the inactivity of the troops, the humiliation of the situation, the sickness and want in Boston. In order that nothing should be left undone to remedy the last, the perplexed ministry spent money lavishly to provision its garrison. Five thousand oxen, fourteen thousand sheep, with a great number of hogs, were purchased, and shipped alive. Vegetables, preserved by a new process, were bought in quantities; wheat and

flour were collected; wood, coal, hay, and other fodder, with beer, porter, rum, Geneva, and the more innocent vinegar, were generously provided. To be sure, the commissions on all these purchases provided fortunes for the relatives of those in office, and the ship-owners found excuses for setting sail as late as possible, in order to increase the hire of their craft. As a result, much of the vast expense — some six hundred thousand pounds for provisions alone — was wasted. Contrary gales detained the ships; the live stock died by wholesale, and was thrown overboard; the vegetables spoiled; and numbers of the ships were lost outright. Others, arriving without convoy at the American coast, were captured by the watchful privateers. But of such vast supplies enough reached Boston to relieve the worst distresses of the inhabitants. Though the poorer of the Whigs had either to sign humiliating declarations in order to share in the rations of the troops, or else to continue on meagre fare, there was enough in the general market for the well-to-do

among them to supply themselves. John Andrews, for instance, though he lived at the rate of six or seven hundred sterling a year, after October ate scarcely three meals of salt meat, "for I was determined to eat fresh provisions, while it was to be got, let it cost what it would."

There was, however, for months a great shortage of fuel. As the winter set in early, and with severity, large quantities were needed, and there was little on hand. The troops, of their own initiative, had already, even in the summer, begun to make depredations on private property, stealing gates and breaking up fences. This the commanders endeavored to stop, but took the hint and did the same by official condemnation. As so many of the inhabitants had left the town, the abandoned houses were torn down for fuel. When the winter came, the troops again began on their own account to steal wood. Howe threatened to hang the next man caught in the act, but still was forced to follow the example.



In choosing buildings for destruction, it was very natural to select Whig property. Perhaps the harshest assault on provincial sentiment had been made in summer, when during August Liberty Tree was felled. The Whigs felt very indignant, but took a peculiar pleasure in the reflection that during the operation a soldier had been accidentally killed. In the various poems written on the occasion the wretch's soul was unanimously consigned to Hades. It was besides remarked that the genuine tree of liberty, of which this had been but a symbol, had now grown so great as to overshadow the continent.

Besides Liberty Tree, the property of leading Whigs suffered. "My house and barn," writes Newell the selectman, on the 16th of November, "pulled down by order of General Robinson." Leach the schoolmaster, whose imprisonment had made him a marked man, had a hard fight to save his property. On Christmas Day he found a party of soldiers destroying his wharf, which had been allotted, as was the custom, to one

of the regiments, in this case the light dragoons. In spite of his efforts Leach was not able to stop this destruction, as evidently in the present state of the town there was no use for wharves. But when his schoolhouse was threatened he carried the matter to headquarters. Howe said Leach had corresponded with the people without. "I denied the charge. . . . Finally I told him, as an Englishman, and a subject of the King's, I claimed protection of my property; and if my House was pulled down, I would follow him to England, or to China, for satisfaction. I expected he would get angry, and order me under Guard, or else to Gaol again. However, in General he behaved kindly." Howe referred him to his subordinates, who delayed giving orders until the soldiers had already broken into the schoolhouse. With much resolution Leach got them from the house and stood on guard at the door until by referring to Howe the schoolhouse was saved. But Leach had meanwhile lost "valuable Books and Instruments, Drawings, Col-

ours, Brushes, several curious Optick Glasses, and sundry things of Value that I brought from India and China, that I cannot replace for money.”<sup>1</sup>

At this time was pulled down the Old North Church, the steeple of the West Church, and John Winthrop’s house, one of the oldest landmarks in the town. Over in Charlestown the troops used for fuel the deserted houses that had not been consumed on the 17th of June. At one time they were demolishing a mill near the American lines, but the provincials drove them away and presently burnt the mill. At another time, by a similar endeavor to lessen the British supply of fuel, there was brought about one of the more amusing incidents of the siege.

The officers in Boston, having little active work to do, were endeavoring to forget the irksomeness and the humiliation of their situation. Through no fault of their own the position was a hard one; they had boasted, and were not allowed to make good their

<sup>1</sup> “N. E. Hist. and Gen. Register,” 1865, 313-314.

vainglory; they had despised their adversaries, and were cooped up in a provincial town. In letters home they uneasily endeavored to explain their inaction; by return mail they learned what the wits of London had to say of both them and the country. "Mrs. Britannia," remarked Horace Walpole, "orders her Senate to proclaim America a continent of cowards, and vote it should be starved, unless it would drink tea with her. She sends her only army to be besieged in one of her towns, and half her fleet to besiege the *terra firma*; but orders her army to do nothing, in hopes that the American Senate in Philadelphia will be so frightened at the British army being besieged in Boston that it will sue for peace." There was sting in these words, but no remedy for the smart.

In order to forget such flings, and to banish the consideration of crowded quarters, irregular rations (for there still were periods of lean supply), slow pay, and inaction, the officers tried to kill time. The cavalry regiments searched for a means of exercising their



horses, and Burgoyne is credited with the solution of their problem. Newell recorded in his journal how his church, after being profaned by Morrison, was examined by the colonel of the light horse, to see if the building was available for a riding-school. "But when it was considered that the Pillars must be taken away, which would bring down the roof, they altered their mind — so that the Pillars saved us."

A more notable building had to suffer instead. The Old South was taken for the purpose. The furnishings were torn out, and Deacon Hubbard's carved pew was carted away to be used as a hog-sty. The dismantled church was transformed into a riding-ring, with tanbark on the floor, and a leaping-bar. One of the galleries was fitted up for a social meeting-place; the remainder were used for spectators, for whose comfort was put in a stove into which disappeared for kindling many of the books and manuscripts stored in the building. For the rest of the siege the Old South, once so formidable, was a centre of Tory fashion.

Burgoyne was credited, also, with the design of putting an almost equally sacred edifice to a purpose still more horrifying to the good Calvinists of Boston. Faneuil Hall, the cradle of liberty, was made a theatre. Various plays were performed, and the amateurs were even so ambitious as to attempt the tragedies of *Zara* and *Tamerlane*. For the latter performance Burgoyne wrote a prologue and epilogue, which were spoken by Lord Rawdon, who had distinguished himself at Bunker Hill, and "a young lady ten years old." But the great event of the season was to be the production of a farce called the *Blockade of Boston*. It was this performance which the Americans interrupted, to the perennial satisfaction of all students of local history.

The play was to be performed on a January night. The *Busy Body* had just been given, and the curtain rose on the farce, presenting a view of the American camp, and the figure of Washington absurdly burlesqued in uniform, wig, and rusty sword. At this moment a sergeant suddenly appeared on

the stage, calling out, "The Yankees are attacking our works on Bunker's Hill!" Conceiving this spirited action a part of the play, the audience began to applaud. But the sergeant vigorously repeated his statement, the sounds of distant cannonading were heard, and an aide called out, "Officers, to your posts!" The officers responded in all haste, and the performance was over for the evening. The reason for this interruption was that Washington had despatched a party to burn some of the houses still standing in Charlestown. The success of the attempt had caused the cannonading, and the consequent interruption of the play. No historian of the siege has failed to remark that the Whig ladies had the laugh of their Tory sisters, forced to return without their escorts.

A month before this incident, on the 5th of December, Burgoyne had sailed for home, recalled largely at his own instance, but already under consideration for the disastrous expedition from Canada. He did not return

to Boston until 1777, when he came as a prisoner. It was when entering the town that he learned that the townspeople had long memories for his real or ascribed indignity to the Old South, for when he remarked to a friend upon the Province House, the headquarters during the siege, a voice from the crowd reminded him that the riding-school was close at hand. Since on the same occasion an old lady loudly beseeched her neighbors to "give the general elbow-room," Boston may be said to have taken its mild revenge on him.

Theatrical performances, balls, and parties were the amusements of the officers at this period of the siege, and persons of fashion doubtless were pleasantly situated. It was not so comfortable for the troops and their dependents, as we have already seen. The lack of fuel and consequent depredations on property led to plundering of a different kind, and petty thievery, which Howe put down with a stern hand. Heavy floggings were meted out to delinquents, and a wife of one



of the privates was even sentenced to public whipping for receiving stolen goods. While there were no true horrors at this siege, there was thus much roughness of conduct among the soldiery, and of this the Whigs were sure to be the victims. With the example of Leach and Lovell before their eyes, the wiser among the provincials spoke cannily and walked softly, and attracted as little attention as possible. But among the poorer class there was much distress for lack of food and fuel, for even when the troops had plenty, it was difficult for the patriots to buy.

With their strength somewhat depleted, it was not to be wondered at that the poorer class was visited by smallpox. The epidemic was a mild one, and few persons died,\* but the visitation created great uneasiness. To lessen his burden, during the winter Howe sent out several companies of the poorer folk from the town, landing them at Point Shirley, with the certainty that the Americans would care for them. But his action called down much reproach, and he was accused of send-

ing out persons with the smallpox, in order to infect the besieging army. It was even charged that he had purposely inoculated some of the evicted. This, of course, is not to be believed; but it is curious to find the British at last taking satisfaction in the epidemic, since it would prevent Washington from attacking.

Gradually a feeling of security came over the besieged town. Admiral Graves had been recalled, and Shulldham took his place. The lighthouse was rebuilt and guarded. Howe felt strong enough to detach a squadron from the fleet in order to carry Clinton with a body of troops to the southward. This was the expedition that made the unsuccessful attack upon Charleston. Howe sent other vessels to the northern provinces and the West Indies, which brought in supplies. The store-ships from England continued to come in, and though Howe was vexed and at times alarmed by the loss of the valuable stores that fell into Washington's hands, on the whole he felt very strong. So

much fuel arrived that in January the destruction of houses and wharves was stopped, and the men who had been on duty for the purpose were commanded to make themselves presentable. Neatness was a hobby with Howe, and he enforced it on his men, though at times the untidiness of his troops seems to have been remarkable.<sup>1</sup>

There are two expressions which show the confidence entertained at this period, not only by the garrison at large, but by the British general. One Crean Brush had made himself a place in the service, not in a military capacity, but as a useful hanger on. In January, anticipating the result of the spring campaign, he offered to raise a body of volunteers, not less than three hundred, with which he proposed, after the "subduction of the main body of the rebel force," to keep order along the Connecticut, and to maintain communication westward with Lake Champlain. There is no record that Howe took him at

<sup>1</sup> See his general order enumerating faults, in Sparks, "Writings of Washington," iii, 236, note.

his word, but he well might have done so, so completely did he misjudge the situation. For about the same time he wrote to Lord Dartmouth that he was not apprehending any attempt by Washington, "by surprise or otherwise."<sup>1</sup>

But the surprise came. On the night of the second of March the American batteries, so long silent, began to play. From Cobble Hill, Lechmere Point, and Lamb's Dam in Roxbury, the three redoubts nearest to Boston, the Americans bombarded the town, and Howe's gunners instantly responded. The American fire was ineffective. "Our people," wrote David How, "splet *the Congress* the Third Time that they fired it." Other heavy mortars were likewise burst, doubtless owing to the inexperience of the gunners. But Washington's purpose, to "divert the attention" of the British from Dorchester, was fulfilled. They had no eyes save for the opposing batteries. For three nights the diversion continued; on the 4th it was, wrote Newell,

<sup>1</sup> See Frothingham's "Siege," 294-295.



“a most terrible bombardment and cannonade, on both sides, as if heaven and earth were engaged.” At Braintree, miles away, Abigail Adams listened to the roar, and recorded the rattling of the windows, and the continual jar of the house. “At six in the morning,” she writes, “there was quiet,” but the quiet was from satisfaction on the one side, and amazement on the other.

On the two heights of Dorchester, commanding the town and the harbor, stood two American redoubts, larger and stronger than the redoubt at Breed’s Hill. On lesser elevations stood smaller works. Seen from



TOWER ON DORCHESTER HEIGHTS  
COMMEMORATING THE EVACUA-  
TION OF BOSTON

below, Washington's preparations seemed complete.

All that moonlit night, while the cannonade proceeded, the Americans had been busy. Everything had been prepared: the forts were staked out, the carts were loaded, the men were ready. As soon as the cannonade began, the men and carts were set in motion; the road was strewn with hay, and bales were piled to screen the carts as they passed to and fro. The troops worked with a will, first placing fascines in chandeliers to form the outlines of their works, and then covering them with earth. There is no better contemporary account given than in the diary of an unnamed officer, published some ninety years later.<sup>1</sup> He wrote:—

“A little before sunset marched off from Roxbury; but for more than half a mile before we came to Dorchester lines,<sup>2</sup> we overtook teams in great plenty, nor did we find

<sup>1</sup> See the *Historical Magazine* for 1864, 328–329.

<sup>2</sup> These were a line of fortifications facing Dorchester, made earlier in the siege.

any vacancy till we came to the lines; in some places they were so wedged in together, we were obliged to leave the road to get forward; we reached the lines at seven o'clock, where we waited half an hour for orders, when a signal was given and the cannonade began at Lamb's fort, and was immediately answered by a very warm fire from the enemy's lines; a brisk fire between N. Boston and our fortifications on Cambridge side, began soon after. It was supposed there was a thousand shot hove this night, by both armies, more than three fourths of which were sent from Boston.<sup>1</sup> Our party, consisting of about 2400 men, with 300 teams, were crossing the marsh, onto the Neck, which together with a fresh breeze from the S. W.<sup>2</sup> concealed us from the enemy till they could see our works by daylight. The

<sup>1</sup> According to Knox's return, given in Frothingham's "Siege," 298, footnote, the Americans threw only 144 shot and 13 shells. The British seem to have needed only an occasional stimulus.

<sup>2</sup> This breeze would bring the smoke of the Roxbury cannonade between the Heights and Boston.

division to which I was assigned, commanded by Col. Whitcomb, was ordered onto the northerly hill, where in one hour's time we had a fort enclosed, with fascines placed in shandelears; and we immediately employed as many men at intrenching as could be advantageously used for that purpose. A larger party was assigned to the high hill, where they erected a larger fort, built much in the same manner as ours. There were four other smaller forts and batteries erected this night on other eminences on the Neck."<sup>1</sup>

It is not to be wondered that the British, on making the discovery, "seemed to be in great confusion."<sup>2</sup> The labor that had been expended appeared prodigious. Washington himself was satisfied with the works; he

<sup>1</sup> It seems generally to be considered that there was but one fort at Dorchester. The statement in the text is confirmed by the Revolutionary Journal of Colonel Baldwin, one of the engineers. "Six works thrown up this night at different places on the Hills & high ground a very Great work for one Night."

<sup>2</sup> Washington's letter to Hancock, "Writings," iii, 304.



knew them to be secure against the British cannon. To Howe the achievement was amazing, and he is said to have exclaimed that his whole army could not have done as much in a month. He wrote to Lord Dartmouth that the rebels must have employed at least twelve thousand men, whereas it was accomplished by two details of little more than two thousand men each. But in those days the British soldier was a poor hand with a shovel, while the Americans were all farmers. Nevertheless it is worth noting the difference in organization displayed in the taking of Dorchester and in the earlier seizure of Breed's Hill. Instead of a small detachment sent to unsurveyed ground, and unaided during both the work and the battle, Washington had his ground prepared,<sup>1</sup> his detachments ready, and his cannon in reserve to send upon the Heights. In the morning the redoubts, presenting the appearance of finished fortifications, were manned with fresh men.

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Baldwin records that he was on the ground in the afternoon.

Howe called at once a council of war. To it the admiral was summoned, and declared positively that his fleet was at the mercy of the rebels. There was but one opinion as to the situation: the honor of the army was at stake, and in addition the military reputation of the general. It was promptly decided to storm the works.

For this purpose twenty-four hundred men were sent to the Castle, which lay close under the Heights to the east, with but a narrow channel between. The command of these men was given to Lord Percy, who hoped now for the distinction which illness had prevented his achieving at Bunker Hill. The attack was to be made at night. Within the lines at Boston Neck was to be gathered another force of troops, which was to second the attack from that direction. This last, in the face of the strong batteries at Roxbury, was a forlorn hope; according to Lieutenant Barker the troops were not to load, but to advance with fixed bayonets, and may have hoped to carry the works by surprise.

Washington would have welcomed the main attack. During the day his works were strengthened and his men reinforced. Orchards had been cut down to serve as abattis, and barrels of earth were ready to roll down upon the British. The men were confident; they were commanded by Thomas, one of the best of the brigadiers, and Washington was there in person with a reminder that put courage into the breast of every American. For the day which he had chosen to decide the fate of Boston was the fifth of March, the anniversary of the Massacre.

Besides all this, Washington had another weapon in reserve. In the Charles River, out of sight of Boston, were his two floating batteries and his bateaux filled with soldiers. They were under Putnam, Sullivan, and Greene; and at a given signal, if Washington deemed the opportunity good, they were to cross the Back Bay and attack the town. — Truly the preparations were for such fighting as had never been seen in America.

But they came to naught, for nature took

a hand in the struggle. Mercifully, since amid the projected battles the town itself might have perished with its inhabitants, there sprang up a gale. "A Hurrycane," wrote Newell, "or terrible sudden storm." The violence of the wind was such that no boat could live in the channel between the Castle and Dorchester, two of Percy's transports were driven ashore, and the attack was postponed. The next day the wind continued, accompanied by heavy rain. The Americans continued to labor on their works, until to every eye they were impregnable by any force that Howe might send against them. Howe called another council, and asked it to concur in his intention to evacuate the town. There was no other decision to make, and on the 6th of March<sup>1</sup> the orders were given.

"Blessed be God," wrote Newell, "our redemption draws nigh."

<sup>1</sup> Frothingham says the 7th. But see the diaries of Barker (*Atlantic*, 39, 553) and Newell (Mass. Hist. Soc. Coll., 1, Series 4, 272).



## CHAPTER XV

### THE EVACUATION

WASHINGTON, looking into Boston from the Heights of Dorchester, witnessed the confusion of the British at the discovery of his works, and watched with grim pleasure the preparations made to attack him. The abandonment of the assault was to him a great disappointment. He had never seen men more alert and willing than his soldiers on the Heights. If Howe had sent a small force against them, Washington felt confident of repulsing it. Had the attacking force been so large as to have appreciably weakened the army in Boston, Washington would have delivered his counterstroke by means of the men in boats under command of Putnam. "He would have had pretty easy work of it,"<sup>1</sup> wrote Washington,

<sup>1</sup> Trevelyan, in concluding that Washington disapproved of this attack by Putnam, is apparently misled

still after nearly a month regretting the issue. He wrote his brother, "that this most remarkable interposition of Providence is for some wise purpose, I have not a doubt. But . . . as no men seemed better disposed to make the appeal than ours did upon that occasion, I can scarcely forbear lamenting the disappointment."

Washington lay for a while inactive while the enemy prepared for their departure. But upon Howe's shoulders was thrown a tremendous task. He had under him, in the army and the fleet, about eleven thousand men.<sup>1</sup> For them he had been gathering military stores and provisions; he had many

by General Heath's curious habit of referring to himself in his Memoirs as "Our General." It was Heath who opposed the project. Against Howe's flimsy defences on the Back Bay, if weakened of defenders, Putnam might well have prevailed, especially in a night attack. They were, wrote Edward Bangs, "ill-constructed, and designed for little but to frighten us." James Warren, who reported on these works, found them to be very weak. See Frothingham's "Siege," 329.

<sup>1</sup> Frothingham's "Siege," 311.

horses, much artillery, and at least a partial equipment for field service, in preparation for the spring campaign. His army had been at Boston for many months, some of the regiments for nearly two years; consequently there had been a natural accumulation of personal effects, for the convenience of the officers, with their wives and families. To carry away this army, its stores, and its belongings, there was not at hand enough shipping.

But the difficulty was greater than this, for Howe had to consider the Tories and their families. Long before this, when Gage was in command, the ministry had written that in case of evacuation "the officers and friends of government must not be left to the rage and insult of rebels, who set no bounds to their barbarity." Howe's ships, therefore, were to be at the service of the Tories, and with full knowledge of the involved results, he so informed them.

When the realization of the situation burst upon the Tories, they were, said a contem-

porary letter, "struck with paleness and astonishment."<sup>1</sup> "Not the last trump," wrote Washington, "could have struck them with greater consternation."<sup>2</sup> Until the very last, no suspicion of such a result seems to have disturbed them; they had borne themselves confidently, and had expected to see their enemies scattered when the new forces should arrive. Among their Whig brethren they had been very high-handed. "The selectmen say," wrote Eldad Taylor, who must have been at Watertown when the selectmen arrived there with the news of the evacuation, "that the Tories were the most dreadful of any, that all the sufferings of the poor for the want of provisions and the necessities of life, were not equal to the dreadful scorn, derision, and contempt from them."

Upon the Tories was now put the hard decision, whether to go or stay. In order to decide, they needed to know what the Whigs

<sup>1</sup> Eldad Taylor to his wife, Watertown, March 18, 1776.

<sup>2</sup> "Writings," iii, 343.



would do to them; and to know that, they had but to consider what they would do to the Whigs in similar case. In their own prison languished the Whig Lovell. They thought of the Whig prisons which might be waiting for them, and they decided to go.

It is not to be denied that the decision was, under the circumstances, wise. The loyalists were right in supposing that the treatment which they would have meted to the Whigs, the Whigs would mete to them. For the country was inflamed against the Tories; Washington himself shared the sentiment against them. Much as we may regret this feeling, we must remember that it was natural to the age. Kind treatment to an opponent in civil war was not yet generally practised; it was Lincoln who made the lesson acceptable to mankind.

Practically all of the Tories, therefore, made up their minds to go. Some few, indeed, remained behind, counting upon their humble station, or inoffensiveness. No harsh treatment of them is recorded. The one

prominent Tory who remained, Mather Byles the minister, soon weathered the storm that rose against him. The remaining loyalists, who planned to depart, were some eleven hundred in number. It was necessary that they should be accommodated in the ships, necessary also that they should take with them such of their valuables as were easily portable. Howe gave orders that room be made for them, and the orders were unselfishly obeyed by the army and navy.

But the haste, the disorder, even the tumult, in the days immediately following the order to depart, were extreme. Each regiment had to be assigned its transports, each Tory to find space for himself and his family, and if possible his goods. There was sorting of effects, bundling up of valuables, and strenuous efforts to get all in safety before Washington should bombard. Diarists agree in the concise terms with which they describe the town. Says Newell for the 8th: "The town all hurry and commotion, the troops with the Refugees and Tories all embarking."

For the 9th he adds : "D°. D°. D°." And for the 10th writes Lieutenant Barker : "Nothing but hurry and confusion."

In the meantime the Americans at Dorchester strengthened their works, and fortified one more eminence, which commanded the channel. Washington did not wish to cannonade the British, for if not attacked he saw no advantage in attacking, lest the town should be set on fire and burned. He therefore bided his time. All his action until now, he wrote Hancock, was but preparatory to taking post on Nook's Hill, a low promontory which ran so far out upon Dorchester flats that from its top cannon could enfilade the British lines at the Neck, and could command almost any part of Boston. An attempt to fortify it upon the night of the 9th was betrayed by the folly of the men, who kindled a fire and were dispersed by British cannon. But by this Washington was not disturbed. He was willing that Howe should delay for a while, if the delay were not too long. He himself had reasons for waiting, since he

reasoned that the British would, on departing, attempt to seize New York, and he wanted time to prepare and despatch a force to hold that place. So he watched the British army, sent a regiment of riflemen to strengthen New York, and made ready five other regiments to depart as soon as the British fleet should leave the harbor.

But at this time the inhabitants of Boston were very uncertain of their own fate. Nothing was more natural than that Washington should attack, or that the exasperated British should on departing, even if unassailed, set fire to the wooden town. The selectmen, as spokesmen for the inhabitants, therefore inquired of Howe what his intentions were. Howe wrote in reply that he had no intention of destroying the town, if he were unmolested. This reply the selectmen sent in haste to Washington, begging for a similar assurance. Washington was not willing to bind himself, and returned answer that as Howe's note was "unauthenticated, and addressed to nobody," he could take no notice



of it. Nevertheless, since no threat was made, the Bostonians felt more at ease.<sup>1</sup>

All this time the wind was contrary, and the troops unable to set sail. They therefore remained in their quarters, while completing their preparations for departure. As the days passed Howe began to destroy what he could not take with him, and to seize what would be of advantage to the rebels. His troops spiked cannon, burned artillery and transport wagons, or else threw them into the harbor, and ruined bulky stores. What he did deliberately, his men increased through malice. The 13th seems to have been the worst day of this period. "The Inhabitants," wrote Newell, "in the utmost distress, thro' fear of the Town being destroyed by the Soldiers, a party of New York Carpenters with axes going thro' the town breaking open houses, &c. Soldiers and sailors plundering of houses, shops, warehouses — Sugar and salt &c. thrown into the

<sup>1</sup> For this correspondence, see Newell's "Diary," or "Washington's Writings," iii, 531-533.

River, which was greatly covered with hogsheads, barrels of flour, house furniture, carts, trucks &c. &c. — One Person suffered *four thousand pounds sterling*, by his shipping being cut to pieces &c. — Another *five thousand pounds sterling*, in salt wantonly thrown into the river.” No wonder that the sturdy old selectman thought these to be “very distressed times.”

Howe’s agent in the work of plundering was that Crean Brush who had offered to police the western part of Massachusetts with three hundred men. Him the general directed to receive all linen and woollen goods which were on sale, and to take those which were not delivered, giving certificates for the same. There is on file the petition of one Jackson, begging for payment for goods taken from him. Brush interpreted his commission very freely, and it was suspected that he was plundering on his own account. Every soldier or sailor who could give his officer the slip was doing the same, in spite of Howe’s honest efforts to stop the plundering.

There was a little genteel thievery as well. Some of the Tories had unfairly secured more than their share of room on shipboard, and found this the chance to take their pick of the furniture of their Whig relatives. "Wat," wrote John Andrews to his brother-in-law in Philadelphia, "has stripped your uncle's house of everything he could conveniently carry off. . . . He has left all the looking glasses and window curtains, with some tables and most of the chairs; *only* two bedsteads and one bed, without any bedding or sheets, or even a rag of linnen of any kind. Some of the china and the principal part of the pewter is the sum of what he has left, save the Library, which was packed up corded to ship, but your uncle Jerry and Mr. Austin went to him and absolutely forbid it, upon his peril."

Another library did not fare so well. At this time disappeared that part of the Prince collection which had not been used for kindling the fires in the Old South. With it vanished the Bradford manuscript history of

the Plymouth plantation, which a later generation freely returned.

While the Tories were so carefully looking to the future, the Whigs were obliged to guard what they could. Newell covers too many incidents with etceteras, but John Andrews who, as soon as the siege was lifted, was free to begin again his correspondence, speaks clearly of his difficulties. Through the siege he had had the care of six houses with their furniture, and as many stores filled with goods; but now he underwent more fatigue and perplexity than for the past eleven months, for "I was obliged," he says, "to take my rounds all day, without any cessation, and scarce ever fail'd of finding depredations made upon some one or other of them, that I was finally necessitated to procure men at the extravagant rate of two dollars a day to sleep in the several houses and stores for a fortnight<sup>1</sup> before the military plunderers went off—for so sure as they were left alone one night, so sure they were plundered." Later

<sup>1</sup> It cannot have been more than eleven days.



he was obliged to pay at the rate of a dollar an hour for hands to assist him in moving; but "such was the demand for laborers, that they were taken from me, even at that, by the tories who bid over me."

So, while the wind continued contrary, the plundering and the destruction continued. Before long the seashore dwellers might do their share of rescue, as the articles which were thrown into the harbor—"mahogany chairs, tables, etc.," records Abigail Adams—were cast up on the beaches. But one by one the transports filled and dropped down the harbor, until at last Washington grew impatient, and on the night of the 16th made his last move. Though the British, aware of the attempt, fired with their remaining guns all night at Nook's Hill, the Americans doggedly entrenched without returning a shot, and in the morning showed a finished redoubt. It was, as Trevelyan well says, Washington's notice to quit.

Howe meekly accepted it. "At 4 o'clock in the Morn.," writes Lieutenant Barker,

“the troops got under arms, at 5 they began to move, and by about 8 or 9 were all embarked, the rear being covered by the Grenadiers and Light Infantry.” The ships sailed down the channel, no shot was fired from the American batteries, and in return the *Fowey*, the last of the fleet, which Howe had threatened should fire the town before she departed, carried away with her her “carcases and combustibles,” and Boston stood free and unharmed.

In half an hour the Americans were in possession. From Roxbury a company of five hundred, picked for the service because they had had the smallpox, entered the British lines, and manned the fortifications which looked toward the harbor. In the redoubt at Bunker Hill sentries appeared to be still doing their duty; but two men who were sent to reconnoitre found them to be dummies, and signalled their companions to follow them. General Putnam was given command of the town, from entering which the army in general, and all civilians, were

prohibited until it was ascertained whether there was danger of smallpox.

Washington's other measures were decisive. He directed Manly, admiral of his little squadron, to follow the British fleet and cut off as many vessels as possible. One result of this order gave the greatest satisfaction. "The brave Captain Manly," wrote Andrews, "has taken the Brig that contained that *cursed* villain, Crean Brush, with great part of the plunder he rob'd the stores of here, that I imagine she must be the richest vessell in the fleet." Other ships were either similarly taken, or were forced to put ashore from lack of provision or of preparation.

Another of Washington's moves was to despatch his five regiments to New York. They went by way of Norwich, Connecticut, and from there, to save fatigue and time, were taken by water to the city. They arrived fresh and ready for the expected struggle, but though they watched long for the British fleet, it did not come.

Washington's third action was to defend

Boston against a possible return of the British. The "lines" at Boston and Charlestown necks were demolished, and on the day after the evacuation Putnam and his men were at work building on Fort Hill a redoubt to command the harbor. With this and the Dorchester batteries the Bostonians might have been satisfied, but within a month they began fortifying Noddle's Island against any possible attempt by sea.

In all these precautions the Americans were hastened by the fact that the British, though they had left the upper harbor, were still in the lower, lying off Nantasket. "From Penn's Hill," wrote Abigail Adams to her husband, "we have a view of the largest fleet ever seen in America. You may count upwards of a hundred and seventy sail. They look like a forest." Their stay greatly puzzled Washington: "what they are doing," he wrote, "the Lord knows." He was troubled as well. The ten regiments of militia, which had strengthened his army since the first of February, had promised to remain



only until the first of April, and he knew that it was "as practical to stop a torrent, as these people, when their time is up." He therefore feared lest the British, by striking with all their force upon his rear, might do him great injury.

This was not the first time that Washington, reasoning according to his own nature, expected from Howe that vigorous action which the British general was unable to perform. Howe, humiliated as he must have felt at receiving, while his vessel passed down the harbor, a despatch from the ministry applauding his decision not to evacuate the town, had no thought of revenge. He blew up the fortifications at the Castle, and prepared to destroy the lighthouse, but his purposes in remaining were to fit his fleet for sea, and to warn those British vessels which were bound for Boston. Nor had he the slightest intention of seizing New York. The statements which had come to Washington's ears, that Howe's destination was Halifax, in spite of the American's incredulity,

were correct. On the 27th of March, ten days after the evacuation, the greater part of Howe's fleet weighed anchor, and sailed away for Halifax. His army felt its shame. "I do not know the thing so desperate," wrote an officer, "I would not undertake, in order to change our situation."<sup>1</sup> But in spite of the chagrin in the hearts of his soldiers, and the despair in the breasts of the Tories, few of them ever looked upon Boston again.

Before this time it had been ascertained that Boston was in no serious danger from smallpox, and on the 20th the main body of the army marched into Boston. It was an occasion of great happiness to the inhabitants, and they "manifested a lively joy." Two days later the town was thrown open to all comers, and once more, as before the Port Bill, entrance by land or ferry was free.

The town was speedily examined in all particulars, and those who had suffered by the siege were encouraged to bring in claims for damages. It was found that, except

<sup>1</sup> Frothingham's "Siege," 310.

for the absolute destruction of buildings for fuel, the injury to houses was inconsiderable. Where the common soldiers had lived, interiors were defaced; yet externally the houses of the town looked much as they had before the siege. Where the officers had lived, the dwellings had suffered little, and even the homes of the prominent Whigs had not been injured. Abigail Adams wrote to her husband that their house was "very dirty, but no other damage has been done to it." She looked upon it as a new acquisition of property. Washington took pains to write Hancock, who had been so ready to sacrifice his belongings to the cause of the country, that his house, and even his furniture and pictures, had received no damage worth mentioning.

To the immense satisfaction of all Whigs, many military stores were found in the town. Most important were more than two hundred pieces of ordnance, the larger part of which, though spiked, could soon be put into serviceable condition. Balls and shells for the cannon and mortars were found; pro-

visions, horses and their provender, medicines in quantity, and many other articles were discovered, amounting in value to nearly

forty thousand pounds. The booty of Brush of course swelled this amount.



GOLD MEDAL COMMEMORATING WASHINGTON'S  
VICTORY

The Whigs now might see their friends again, and for a short time enjoyed military society of a new

sort. John Andrews reports "nothing but a continual round of company." "Last week," he recorded, "I had the honor of General Washington with his lady, General Gates, Mr. Custos and Lady, with aid de Camps, &ca, to dine with me." It was an occasion of which he boasted to his dying day. In the town, now flooded with provision, there were many eager to feast Washington.



But he did not tarry long. While Howe and his fleet were in the bay, he kept his men at work demolishing the British defences against the land, and strengthening the forts which looked seaward, and he was continually on his guard against the blow which Howe might deliver. But when the British had sailed away to the north-east, Washington himself, on the 4th of April, set off for New York.

Howe had nevertheless left vessels at Nan-tasket Roads, to intercept the troop-ships and stores which were on their way to him. In this he was partly successful, for seven ship-loads of Highlanders were by this means saved from Yankee prisons. But even while the evacuation was in progress British vessels were captured in the harbor, and now in sight of the squadron and its Highlanders was taken the richest store-ship that had yet fallen into American hands. There was a brisk fight, also, between an American schooner, aground on Shirley Point, and thirteen boat-loads of men from the war-

ships. The boats were beaten off, but the British had accomplished the death of the captain of the schooner, America's first naval hero, Mugford of Marblehead.

At length a determined effort was made to drive away the squadron. The militia was called out, and artillery was carried to islands down the harbor. There was a brief cannonade between the Americans and the fleet. Then the British commander, finding his anchorage no longer safe, blew up the lighthouse and followed Howe to Halifax. This was on the second anniversary of the enforcement of the Port Bill. Two days later the remainder of the Highlanders, unsuspectingly entering the harbor, fell into the hands of the Americans.<sup>1</sup>

The British resentment aroused by this last mischance was mild compared with the general indignation which burst on Howe's

<sup>1</sup> See concerning these men and their commander the interesting monograph by Charles H. Walcott: "Sir Archibald Campbell of Inverneil, sometime Prisoner of War in the Jail at Concord, Massachusetts." Privately printed.

head at his conduct of the defence of Boston, and his hurried evacuation. The ministry announced the departure from Boston in the briefest fashion, but were forced to explain and excuse it in both the Commons and the Lords. "The General thought proper to shift his position," explained the Earl of Suffolk to the Lords, "in order, in the first place, to protect Halifax."<sup>1</sup> But the defence was riddled, Howe's general weakness was exposed, his neglect to fortify Dorchester was pointed out, and the English Whigs acutely reasoned that he must have had a virtual agreement with Washington to purchase the safety of the fleet and army at the price of immunity to the town. Newspapers and pamphleteers took up the subject, and Howe was eventually forced to ask for an inquiry into his conduct of the siege. To his dying day he was severely criticised for his generalship in America, and especially at Boston.

Of the other British military leaders, not

<sup>1</sup> "The Writings of Washington," iii, 531.

one was successful. Gage was never again given a command. Burgoyne returned to Boston only as a prisoner. Clinton for a time commanded in America, but he was recalled.

As for the master whom these generals served, the king who was the cause of the war, his failure was complete. George III lost not only his revolted colonies, but also the dearer prize for which he fought, personal government. When at last peace was signed, the Americans had gained independence, and the English people had finally established the supremacy of Parliament. The king might reign, but he could no longer govern.

The fate of the Tories cannot detain us long, painful as it was. Some few returned to America after the war, and made again places for themselves. Among these was Judge Curwen. Some went to England, where they were out of their element. Dependent for the most part on the bounty of the crown, they lived in hope of a change of fortune. They longed for their homes, and sickened



for a sight of the New England country, to them the most beautiful on earth. Many of them were too old to begin life anew: by the end of the war it was recorded that, of the Massachusetts Tory leaders, forty-five died in England. One of these was Hutchinson, upon whose life the best comment is the concluding sentence of Sabine's brief biography: "I forget, in his melancholy end, all else."

But numbers of the Tories remained in Canada. Doubtless many were discouraged from going to England by the reports of the condition of those already there. "As to your coming here," wrote Governor Wentworth from London to a friend in New Brunswick, "or any other Loyalist that can get clams and potatoes in America, they would most certainly regret making bad worse."<sup>1</sup> On such advice as this many, indeed most, of the refugees remained in Canada, and after the war, in which many of them fought, were of great service in building up that country. Nova Scotia and New Brunswick

<sup>1</sup> Sabine's "Loyalists," 217.

received the larger number of them; they became leaders of the bar, judges, physicians, prominent office-holders. It is not to be denied that among them were suffering and misery; they had lost much and had to begin again from the bottom, and many succumbed to the difficulties of the new life. After the war attempt was made to gain from the United States compensation for their losses; but the new country was unable even to recompense those who had suffered in its cause. The loyalists therefore looked to Britain for help, and in some measure found it, in pensions, grants of money, and holdings of land.

; There is much to regret in this emigration, which took from New England such numbers of men and women of good blood and gentle breeding. For the Tories were largely of the better class, many of them had been educated at Harvard, and they represented an element which no community can afford to lose. Some of the difficulties of the new commonwealths were due to the loss of the conservative balance-wheel; some further

troubles beset them from the bitterness of feeling in the new colonists across the border. This has now died away, but boundary and fisheries disputes long brought out the hostility latent in the descendants of the Tories.

So much for the losers in the fight. Of the winners, no American needs to be more than reminded of their fame and their successes. At the siege Washington made his first claim to fame. He proved his tenacity, his mastery of men, and the greatness of his resolution and daring. Some of his generals followed him in his success, some were failures. Lee attempted treachery, but was finally discarded by both sides. Gates endeavored to displace Washington, but ruined himself in the attempt. But most of Washington's other generals were able men. Greene proved himself to be a military genius second only to Washington. Knox, the sole Bostonian on Washington's staff, commanded the artillery throughout the war.

Of the chief Boston politicians, all ended their days honorably. Soon after the evacua-

tion the body of Warren was sought for among the dead buried on Bunker Hill. It was found, identified, and entombed at Boston with solemn mourning. Hancock presently signed his name on the Declaration of Independence so large that King George could read it without his spectacles. The Boston merchant served the Continental Congress for another year as its president; then returning to Boston he became "King" Hancock, the governor of Massachusetts practically for life. John Adams passed to greater usefulness as envoy to France, first minister to Great Britain, and finally as Washington's successor as President. But to a student of Boston itself the mind dwells most willingly on Samuel Adams, "the man of the town meeting," who roused the rebellion, guided it skilfully, served usefully in many public capacities, and became governor after Hancock's death. His statue stands to-day in the square named after him, not far from the Old South and the old Town House, and within sight of Faneuil Hall.



But we trespass beyond the period of this history. When Howe sailed away, Boston's share in the Revolution was practically ended. No attempt was made to retake the town, for there could be no profit in gaining what could not be held. In the remaining years of the war the town had no more serious duty than fitting out ships of war and privateers, and of entertaining the officers of the French fleet. But Boston had earned its rest. For nearly sixteen years the town had stood as the spokesman for liberty, the leader of revolt. In bringing the country safely through a critical period, the services of Boston were essential.



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